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CHANDOS

A NOVEL

By OUIDA

AUTHOR OF 'CECIL CASTLEMAINE'S GAGE,' 'HELD IN BONDAGE,'
'A DOG OF FLANDERS,' 'PASCAREL,' ETC.

"God and man and hope abandon me,
But I to them and to myself remain constant."
SHELLEY

"Treason doth never prosper. What's the reason?
Why, when it prospers, none dare call it treason."
SIR JOHN HARRINGTON

A NEW EDITION

LONDON
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CHANDOS.

PROEM.

TWO VOWS.

It was the sultry close of a midsummer night in the heart of London.

In all the narrow streets about Westminster there were the roar of traffic and the glare of midnight; the throngs were jostling each other, the unscreened gas-jets of the itinerant stalls were flaring yellow in the stillness of the air, the screaming of ballad-singers pierced shrilly above the incessant noise of wheels, the shouting of costermongers, butchers, oyster-vendors, and fried-fish-sellers added its uproar of the pandemonium, and the steam and stench of hot drinks and of rotting vegetables was blent with the heaviness of smoke borne down by the tempestuous oppression of the night. Above, the sky was dark; but across the darkness now and then a falling star shot swiftly down the clouds—in fleeting memento and reminder of all the glorious world of forest and of lake, of rushing river and of deep fern-glade, of leafy shelter lying cool in mountain-shadows, and of sea-waves breaking upon wet brown rocks, which were forgotten here, in the stress of trade, in the strife of crowds, in the cramped toil of poverty, and in the wealth of mingled nations.

Few in town that night looked up at the shooting star as it flashed its fiery passage above the dull, leaden, noxious, gas-lit streets; none, indeed, except perhaps here and there a young dreamer, with threadbare coat and mad but sweet ambitions for all that was impossible—or some woman, young, haggard, painted, half drunk, whose aching eyes were caught by it, and whose sodden memory went wearily back to a long-buried childhood, when the stars were out over the moorland of a cottage home, and her childish wonder had watched them rise over the black edge of ricks through the little lozenge of the lattice, and sleep had come to her under their light, happily, innocently, haunted by no terrors, to the clear music of a mother's spinning-song. Save these, none thought of the star as it dropped down above the jagged wilderness of roofs:

858

the crowd was looking elsewhere—to the lighted entrance of the Lower House.

The multitude had gathered thickly. There had been, as it was known, a powerful and heated debate, a political crisis of decisive eminence—of some peril, moreover, to the country, from a rash war policy urged upon the existing ministry, which must, it had been feared, have resigned to escape stooping to measures forced on it by the opposition. The false position had been avoided by the genius of one man alone; the government had stood firm, and had vanquished its foes, through the mighty ability of its chief statesman—one who, more fortunate than Pitt in the brilliant success of his measures at home and abroad, was often called, like Pitt, the Great Commoner.

Yet it was a title, perhaps, that scarcely suited him; for he was patrician to the core—patrician in pride, in name, in blood, and in caste, though he disdained all coronets. You could not have lowered him; also, you could not have ennobled him. He was simply and intrinsically a great man. At the same time, he was the haughtiest of aristocrats—too haughty ever to stoop to the patent of a present earldom or a marquisate of the new creation.

The crowds pressed closest and densest as one by one his colleagues appeared, passing to their carriages; and his name ran breathlessly down the people's ranks: they trusted him, they honoured him, they were proud of him, as this country, so naturally and strongly conservative in its instincts, however radical it be in its reasonings, is proud of its aristocratic leaders. They were ready to cheer him to the echo the moment he appeared; specially ready to-night, for he had achieved a signal victory, and the populace always sense success.

At last he came—a tall and handsome man, about fifty years of age, and with a physiognomy that showed both the habit and the power of command. He was satiated to weariness with public homage; but he acknowledged the greetings of the people as they rang on the night air with a kindly, if negligent, courtesy—the courtesy of a *grand seigneur*.

At his side was a boy, his only son, a mere child of some seven years. Indulged in his every inclination, he had been taken to the House that evening by a good-natured peer, to a seat under the clock, and had for the first time heard his father speak—heard, with his eyes glittering, and his cheeks flushed, and his heart beating, in passionate triumph and enthusiastic love.

"That boy will be a great man, if—if he don't have too much genius," the old peer who sat beside him had said to himself, watching his kindling eyes and breathless lips, and knowing, like a world-wise old man of business as he was, that the fate of Prometheus is the same in all ages, and that it is Mediocrity which pays.

The boy had a singular beauty; it had been a characteristic of the race through centuries; woman's fashionable fancies were shown in the elegance of his dress, with its velvets, and laces, and delicate hues; and the gold of his hair, falling over his shoulders

in long clustering curls, glittered in the lamp-light as, at his father's recognition of the crowd, he lifted his cap with its eagle's feather and bowed to them too—a child's bright, gratified amusement blent with the proud, courtly grace of his father's manner, already hereditary in him.

The hearts of the people warmed to him for his beauty and for his childhood, the hearts of the women especially, and they gave him another and yet heartier cheer. He bowed like a young prince to the right and to the left, and looked up in the grave statesman's face with a joyous laugh; yet still in his eyes, as they glanced over the throngs, there was the look, dreamy, brilliant, half wistful, half eager, which was beyond his age, and which had made the old peer fear for him, that gift of the gods which the world does not love, because—most unwisely, most suicidally—it fears it.

Amongst the crowd, wedged in with the thousands pressing there about the carriages waiting for the members, stood a woman: she was in mourning-clothes, that hung sombrely and heavily about her, and a dark veil obscured her features. Her features could not be seen, her eyes alone shone through the folds of her veil, and were fixed on the famous politician as he came out from the entrance of the Commons, and on the young boy by his side. Her own hand was on the shoulder of a child but a few years older, very strongly built, short, and muscularly made, with features of a thoroughly English type—that which is vulgarly called the Saxon; his skin was very tanned, his linen torn and untidy, his hands brown as berries and broad as a young lion's paws, and his eyes, blue, keen, with an infinite mass of humour in them, looked steadily out from under the straw hat drawn over them; they too were fastened on the bright hair and the delicate dress of the little aristocrat, with some such look as, when a child, Manon Phlippon gave the gay and glittering groups of Versailles and the young Queen whom she lived to drag to the scaffold.

The woman's hand weighed more heavily on his shoulder, and she stooped her head till her lips touched his cheek, with a hoarse whisper,—

"There is your enemy!"

The boy nodded silently, and a look passed over his face, over the sturdy defiance of his mouth and the honest mischief of his eyes, very bitter, very merciless—worse in one so young than the fiercest outburst of evanescent rage.

Life was but just opening in him; but already he had learned man's first instinct—to hate.

Where they stood, on the edge of the pressing throng, that had left but a narrow lane for the passage of the ministers, the little patrician was close to the boy who stared at him with so dogged a jealousy and detestation in his glance; and his own eyes, with a wondering surprise, rested a moment on the only face that had ever looked darkly on him. He paused, the naturally generous and tender temper in him leading him, unconsciously, rather to pity and to reconciliation than to offence: he had never seen this

stranger before, but his instinct was to woo him out of his angry solitude. He touched him with a bright and loving smile, giving what he had to give.

"You look vexed and tired: take these!"

He put into his hand a packet of French bonbons that had been given in the Ladies' Gallery, and followed his father, with a glad, rapid bound, into the carriage, by whose steps they were. The servants shut the door with a clash, the wheels rolled away with a loud clatter, swelling the thunder of the busy midnight streets. The boy in the throng stood silent, looking at the dainty, costly, enamelled Paris packet of crystallised sweetmeats and fruits. Then, without a word, he flung it savagely on the ground, and stamped it out under his heel, making the painted, silvered paper, and the luscious bonbons, a battered, trampled mass, down in the mud of the pavement.

There was a world of eloquence in the gesture.

As his carriage rolled through the streets in the late night, the great statesman passed his hand lightly over the fair locks of his son. The child had much of his own nature, of his own intellect, and he saw in his young heir the future security for the continuance of the brilliance and power of his race.

"You will make the nation honour you for yourself one day, Ernest?" he said, gently.

There were tears in the child's eyes, and a brave and noble promise and comprehension in his face, as he looked up at his father.

"If I live I will!"

As they were propelled onward by the pressure of the moving crowd, the woman and her son went slowly along the heated streets, with the gas-flare of some fish or meat-shop thrown on them, as they passed, in yellow, flaring illumination. They were not poor, though on foot thus, and though the lad's dress was torn and soiled through his own inveterate activity and endless mischief. No pressure of any want was on them: yet his glance followed the carriages, darted under the awnings before the mansions, and penetrated wherever riches or rank struck him, with the hungry, impatient, longing look of a starving Rousseau or Gilbert, hounded to socialism for lack of a sou—a look very strange and premature on a face so young and naturally so mirthful and good-humoured.

His mother watched him, and leaned her hand again on his shoulder.

"You will have your revenge one day."

"*Wont I!*"

"The school-boy answer was ground out with a meaning intensity, as he set his teeth like a young bulldog.

Each had promised to gain a very different *aristeia*. When they came to the combat, with whom would rest the victory?

BOOK THE FIRST.

CHAPTER I.

PYTHIAS, OR MEPHISTOPHELES.

It was the height of the London season. Town filled. Death had made gaps in the crowd; but new-comers filled up the rents, and the lost were unmissed. Brows, that the last year had been stainless as snow, had been smirched with slander or stained with shame; but the opals crowning them belied their ancient fame, and did not pale. Light hearts had grown heavy, proud heads had been bent, fair cheeks had learned to cover care with pearl-powder, words had been spoken that a lifetime could not recall, links had been broken that an eternity would not unite, seeds of sin and sorrow had been sown never again to be uprooted, in the brief months that lay between "last season" and this phœnix of the new; but the fashionable world met again with smiling lips, and bland complaisance, and unutterable *ennui*, and charming mutual compliment, to go through all the old routine with well-trained faces, befitting the arena.

It was April. The last carriages had rolled out by the Corner, the last hacks paced out of the Ride, the last sunlight was fading; epicures were reflecting on their club dinners, beauties were studying the contents of their jewel-boxes, the one enjoying a *matelote*, the other a conquest, in dreamy anticipation; chandeliers were being lit for political receptions, where it would be a three-hours' campaign to crush up the stairs; and members waiting to go in on Supply were improving their minds by discussing a new dancer's ankles, and the extraordinary scratching of Lord of the Isles for the Guineas. The West, in a word, was beginning its Business, which is Pleasure; while the East laid aside its Pleasure, which is Business; and it was near eight o'clock on a spring night in London.

Half a hundred entertainments waited for his selection; all the loveliest women, of worlds proper and improper, were calculating their chances of securing his preference: yet alone in his house in Park Lane, a man lay in idleness and ease, indolently smoking a narghilé from a great silver basin of rose-water.

A stray sunbeam lingered here and there on some delicate bit of statuary, or jewelled tazza, or Cellini cup, in a chamber luxurious

enough for an imperial bride's, with its hangings of violet velvet, its ceiling painted after Greuze, its walls hung with rich Old Masters and *Petits Maîtres*, and its niches screening some group of Coysevox, Coustou, or Canova. It was, however, only the "study," the pet retreat of its owner, a collector and a connoisseur, who lay now on his sofa, near a table strewn with Elzevirs, Paris novels, MSS., croquis, before-letter proofs, and dainty female notes. The fading sunlight fell across his face as his head rested on his left arm. A painter would have drawn him as Alcibiades, or, more poetically still, would have idealised him into the Phœbus Lykêgenês, so singularly great was his personal beauty. A physiognomist would have said, "Here is a voluptuary, here is a profound thinker, here is a poet, here is one who may be a leader and chief among men if he will;" but would have added, "Here is one who may, fifty to one, sink too softly into his bed of rose-leaves ever to care to rise in full strength out of it." Artists were chiefly attracted by the power, men by the brilliance, and women by the gentleness, of this dazzling beauty: for the latter, indeed, a subtler spell yet lay in the deep-blue, poetic, eloquent eyes, which ever gave such tender homage, such dangerous prayer, to their own loveliness. The brow was magnificent, meditative enough for Plato's; the rich and gold-hued hair, bright as any Helen's; the gaze of the eyes in rest, thoughtful as might be that of a Marcus Aurelius; the mouth, insouciant and epicurean as the lips of a Catullus. The contradictions in the features were the anomalies in the character. For the rest, his stature was much above the ordinary height; his attitude showed both the strength and grace of his limbs; his age was a year or so over thirty, and his reverie now was of the lightest and laziest: he had not a single care on him.

There was a double door to his room; he was never disturbed there, either by servants or friends, or any sort of pretext; his house was as free to all as a caravanserai, but to this chamber only all the world was interdicted. Yet the first handle turned, the second turned, the *portière* was tossed aside with a jerk, and the audacious new-comer entered.

"My dear Ernest! you alone at this time of the day? What a miracle! I have actually dared to invade your sanctum, your holy of holies; deuced pleasant place, too. What is it you do here? paint your prettiest picture, chip your prettiest statuette, make love to your prettiest mistress, write your novels, study occult sciences, meditate on the Dialectics, seek the philosopher's stone, search for the Venetian colour-secret, have suppers *à la Régence* to which you deny even your bosom friends? or what is it? On my honour, I am very curious!"

"Tell me some news, Trevenna," said his host, with an amused smile, in a voice low, clear, lingering and melodious as music, contrasting forcibly with the sharp, ringing, metallic tones of his visitor. "How came you to come in here? You know——"

"I know; but I had curiosity and a good opportunity: what mortal, or what morals, ever resisted such a combination? I am

weaker than a woman. No principle, not a shred. Am I responsible for that? No;—organisation and education. How dark you are here! May I ring for lights?"

"Do you want light to talk by?" laughed his friend, stretching his hand to a bell-handle. "Your tongue generally runs on oiled wheels."

"Of course it does. It's my trade to talk; I rattle my tongue as a nigger singer rattles his bones; I must chat as an organ-grinder grinds. I'm asked out to dine to talk. If I grew a bore, every creature would drop me; and if I grew too dull to get up a scandal, I should be very sure never to get a dinner. My tongue's my merchandise!"

With which statement of his social status, John Trevenna jerked himself out of his chair, and, while the groom of the chamber lighted the chandelier, strolled round the apartment. He was a man of six or eight-and-thirty, short, a little stout, but wonderfully supple, quick, and agile, a master of all the sciences of the gymnasium; his face was plain and irregular in feature, but bright, frank, full of good-humour almost to joviality, and of keen, alert, cultured intelligence, prepossessing through its blunt and honest candour, its merry smile showing the strong white teeth, its *bonhomie*, and its look of acute indomitable *cleverness*,—a cleverness which is no more genius than an English farce is wit, but which, sharper than intellect alone, more audacious than talent alone, will trick the world, and throw its foes, and thrive in all it does, while genius gets stoned or starves. He loitered round the room, with his eye-glass up, glancing here, there, and everywhere, as though he were an embryo auctioneer, and stopped at last before a Daphne flying from Apollo and just caught by him, shrouded in rose-coloured curtains.

"Nice little girl, this! Rather enticing; made her look alive with that rose-light; tantalising to know it's nothing but marble; sweetly pretty, certainly."

"Sweetly pretty? Good heavens, my dear fellow, hold your tongue! One would think you a cockney adoring the moon, or a lady's maid a new fashion. That Daphne's the most perfect thing Coustou ever did."

"Don't know anything about them! Never see a bit of difference in them from the plaster casts you buy for a shilling. Won't break quite so soon, to be sure. She *is* pretty,—nice and round, and all that; but I don't care a straw about art. Never could."

"And you are proud of your paganism? Well, you are not the first person who has boasted of his heresy for the sheer sake of appearing singular."

"To be sure! I understand Wilkes: let me be the ugliest man in Europe, rather than remain in mediocrity among the medium plain faces. There's not a hair's difference between notoriety and fame. Be celebrated for something, and, if you can't jump into a pit like Curtius, pop yourself into a volcano like Empedocles: the foolery's immortalised just as well as a heroism; the world talks of you, that's all you want. If I couldn't be Alexander, I'd be

Diogenes; if I weren't a great hero, I'd be a most ingenious murderer. There's no radical difference between the two! But, I say, do you ever remember what a fearful amount you throw away on these dolly things?" pursued Trevenna, interrupting himself to strike his cane on the Daphne.

"The only things worth the money I spend! My dear Trevenna, I thank you much for your interest, but I can dispense with your counsels."

"Pardon! I'm a brusque fellow, and say what comes uppermost; wiser if I kept it sometimes. If you do live *en prince*, who wouldn't that could? I don't believe in renunciation. He is a shrewd fellow who, forced on abstinence, vows he likes it and says he does it for digestion; but I love the good things of life and say so, though I can't afford them. I should sell my soul for turtle soup! By the way, monseigneur, before we eat *your* soup there's a little business——"

"Business? In the evening! Do you wish to give me dyspepsia before dinner?"

"No; but I want to digest mine by feeling I've done my duty. There's something we want you to sign; Legrew does, at the least——"

"On my honour, Trevenna," cried his host, with a gay, careless laugh, "you are abominable! How often have I told you that I trust you implicitly,—you are fit for Chancellor of the Exchequer,—and that I never will be worried by any nonsense of the kind?"

"But, *caro mio*," pleaded Trevenna, coaxingly, "we can't do without your signature. What's to be done? We can't give leases, and draw checks, and get bonds and mortgages, without your handwriting."

The last words caught the indolent listener's inattentive ear. He looked up surprised.

"Bonds? Mortgages? What can I possibly have to do with them?"

"Moneys are lent out on mortgages, I only used the words as example," explained his prime minister, a little rapidly. "We trouble you as little as we can; only want your name now. Remember, the Guineas let you in heavily this time; one can't transfer those large sums without your authorisation Just let me read you over this paper; it's merely——"

"Spare me! spare me!" cried the lord of this dainty art-palace, to whom the ominous crackle of the parchment was worse than the singing of a rattlesnake. "Smindyrides felt tired if he saw a man at work in the fields: what would he have felt if he had seen a modern law document?"

"Just sign, and you won't see it any more," pleaded Trevenna, who knew the facile points of a character he had long made his special study, and knew that, to be saved farther expostulation, his chief would comply.

He did so, raising himself with slow, graceful indolence from his cushions, and resigning the mouth-piece of his hookah reluctantly. The compliance was most insouciant; the willingness to sign, in

ignorance of what he signed, a trustful carelessness that was almost womanish. But life had fostered this side of his character, and had done nothing to counteract it.

"Stay! you haven't heard what it is," put in Trevenna, while he rattled off, with clear, quick precision that showed him a master of *précis* and would have qualified him to explain a budget in St. Stephen's, a *résumé* of what he stated the contents of the document to be; a very harmless document, according to him, merely reverting to the management of the immense properties of which his friend was the possessor. His hearer idly listened two minutes, then let his thoughts drift away to the chiaroscuro of a Ghirlandajo opposite, and to speculation whether Reynolds was quite correct in his estimate of the invariable amount of shadow employed by the old masters.

Trevenna's exposition, lucid, brief, and as little tiresome as legalities can be made, ended, he took the pen without more opposition or reflection, and dashed his name down in bold, clear letters,—

"Ernest Chandos."

He pushed the paper to Trevenna with the ink still wet on the signature.

"There! and remember henceforward, my very good fellow, never to trouble me with all this nonsense again. I might as well manage my own affairs from first to last, if my men of business must come to me about every trifle. I would not trust the lawyers without looking after them (though if a lawyer mean to cheat you he *will*, let you have as many eyes as Argus); but with you to give them the check they can't go wrong. By the way, Trevenna, were you not touched on the Heath, yourself?"

"Well, Lord of the Isles let us all in, more or less," said Trevenna, crumpling up his papers, "but, you know, poor hedgers like me can't ever risk more than a tenner or so."

"Still, your inimitable book-making failed you at the Guineas? I was afraid so. Draw on me as you need: you have blank checks of mine; fill one up as you like."

"No, no! oh, hang it, monseigneur! You put one out of countenance."

"Impossible miracle, Trevenna!" laughed Chandos, looking on him with kindly eyes. "How can any little matter like that ever repay all the time and talent you are good enough to waste in my service? Besides, between old friends there is never a question of obligation. Nine o'clock? We must go to dinner. I promised Claire Rahel not to miss her supper. She is enchanting! She has the *sourire de la Régence* and the wit of Sophie Arnauld."

"And the smiles cost you an India of diamonds, and the wit is paid a cashmere each mot! If Monde deigned to recognise Demi-Monde, how would the Countess admire being outrivalled by the actress?"

"The Countess is like Crispin, *rivale de soi-même* alone. All pretty women and all dull men are vain! The belles and the bores always worship at their own shrines," laughed Chandos, as his

groom of the chambers announced the arrival in the drawing-rooms of other guests from the Guards and the Legations, to one of those "little dinners" which were the most coveted and exclusive entertainments in London.

"We must go, I suppose; Prince Charles might wait, but the turbot must not," he said, with a yawn,—he was accustomed to have the world wait on and wait for him,—as he held back the *portière*, and signed to John Trevenna to pass out before him, down the lighted corridor, with its exotics, statues, and bronzes glancing under the radiance from the candelabra. He would have kept a Serene Highness attending his pleasure; but he gave the *pas* with as much courtesy as to a monarch to that very needed man-about-town, his dependent, hanger-on, and *fidus Achates*, John Trevenna.

CHAPTER II.

"LA COMETE ET SA QUEUE."

"DID you see Chandos' trap in the ring to-day? Four-in-hand greys, set of outriders, cream-and-silver liveries,—prettiest thing ever seen in the park," said Winters of the First Guards.

"Chandos has given six thousand for Wild Geranium,—best bit of blood out of Danesbury; safe to win at the Ducal," said the Marquis of Bawood.

"Chandos has bought the Titians at the Duc de Valleré's sales; the nation ought to have bidden for them," said the Earl of Rougemont.

"Nation's much better off; he's given them to the country," said Stentor, a very great art-critic.

"You don't mean it?" said the Duke of Argentine. "That man would give his head away."

"And if the Cabinet bid for it they might keep in office," said George Lorn, who was a cynical dandy.

"Flora has been faithful three months: Chandos *is* a sorcerer!" yawned Sir Phipps Lacy, talking of a beautiful sovereign of the equivocal world.

"Chandos has a bottomless purse, my dear Sir Phipps: there's the key to Flora's new constancy," said John Trevenna.

"You have read 'Lucrèce,' of course? There is no writer in Europe like Chandos,—such wit, such pathos, such power. I had the early sheets before it was published," said the Duchess of Belamour, proud of her privilege.

"'Lucrèce' is the most marvellous thing since 'Pelham.'"

"The most poetic since Byron!"

"Oh, it is a poem in prose!"

"And yet such exquisite satire!"

"Alfred de Musset never probed human nature so deeply!"

"Shelley never attained more perfect art."

"Certainly not! you know it is in the sixth edition already?"

"Of course! every one is reading it."

So the talk ran round at a garden-party near Richmond, among the guests of a Bourbon prince, and for once the proverb was wrong, and the absent was found by his friends in the right, with an universal vote of adoration. When the sun is at his noon, and they are basking in his light, the whole floral world turn after him in idolatry; if he ever set, perhaps they hang their heads, and hug the night-damp, and nod together in condemnation of the spots that dimmed their fallen god's beauty; they have never spoken of them before, but they have all seen them; and then the judicious flowers sigh a vote of censure.

He of whom the world chattered now was the darling of Fortune; his sins and stains, if he had any, were buried in oblivion, or only cited tenderly, almost admiringly, as a woman puts her diamonds on black velvet that their brilliance may be enhanced by the contrast. For to women he was the most handsome man of his day, and to men he was the leader of fashion and the donor of the best dinners in Europe. Friendship is never sealed so firmly as with the green wax of a pure claret, and our Patroclus is sacred to us after sharing his salt and his bread, at least if it flavour clear soup and be *pain à la mode*;—black broth and black bread might not have such sanctifying properties.

"How late you are!" cried the Countess de la Vivarol, making room for him beside her in a summer concert-room, as the idol of the hour appeared at last for half an hour in the prince's grounds. A fairer thing than this fairest of fashionable empresses was never seen at Longchamps on a great race-day, or in the Salle des Maréchaux at a reception; yet, such is the ingratitude or inconstancy of nature, Chandos looked less at her than at a strange face some distance from him, although he had for the last two years been no more rivalled near the charming Countess than if she had worn a silver label or a silver collar round her neck to denote his proprietorship, like his retriever Beau Sire, or his pet deer down at Clarencieux. Madame noted the *lèse-majesté*: she was not a woman to forgive it, and still less a woman to complain of it.

"They are talking about 'Lucrèce,' Ernest. They worship it," she said, dropping her lovely, mellow, laughing, starlike eyes on him. They had fallen on him with effect, twenty months before, in the soft moonlight on a certain balcony at Compiègne.

He laughed. He cared little what the world said of him, he had ruled it too long to be its slave.

"Indeed! And—do they read it?"

"Yes. They *do* read *you*," laughed Madame, too, "though they would swear to you on hearsay just so warmly All the world idolises the book."

"Ah! I would prefer half a dozen who could criticise it."

"*Tais-toi*. How ungrateful you are!"

"Because my head does not get turned? That was Sulla's worst crime to mankind. They say 'Lucrèce' is a masterpiece *because* it

it is in its fifth edition, and they expect me to be intoxicated with such discerning applause," said Chandos, with his melodious, amused laugh, clear and gay as a woman's. Fame had come to him so young, he had gained the world's incense with so little effort, that he held both in a certain nonchalant mockery.

"To be sure! when men go mad if they get one grain of applause, it is very discourteous in you to keep cool when you have a hundred. What a reflection it is upon them! Where are you looking, Ernest?"

"Where can I be looking?" he said, with a smile, as he turned his eyes full upon her. It would not have done to confess to the Countess that he was scarcely heeding her words because a face rarer to him had caught his gaze in the fashionable crowd.

The Countess gave a little sceptical meaning arch of her delicate eyebrows. "She is very beautiful, *mon ami*, but her beauty will not do for you."

"Why?"

"Because the passage to it will be terrible," said Madame de la Vivarol, with a shiver of her perfumed laces. Her teeth were set in rage under the soft, laughing, rose-hued lips, but she could play her pretty, careless vaudeville without a sign of jealousy.

"Terrible! you pique my curiosity. I have no fondness, though, for tempests in my love affairs.

> 'En l'amour si rien n'est amer,
> Qu'on est sot de ne pas aimer!
> Si tout l'est au dégré suprême,
> Quand est sot alors que l'on aime!

Terrible, too? In what way?"

"*Par la porte du marriage*," said La Vivarol, with a silvery laugh.

Chandos laughed too, as he leaned over her chair.

"Terrible indeed, then. It were too much to pay for a Helen! You have disenchanted me at once; so tell me now who she is."

"Not I! I am not master of the ceremonies."

There was a certain dark, angry flush under the curl of her silky lashes that he knew very well.

'I am a little out of your favour to-day, Heloïse?" said Chandos, amusedly. The passing storm of a mistress's jealousy was the darkest passage his cloudless life had encountered. "I know my crime: I was not at your reception last night."

"Weren't you?" asked La Vivarol, with the most perfect air of indifferent surprise. "I could not tell who was and who was not. How I detest your English crushes!"

"Nevertheless, that was my sin," laughed Chandos. 'What excuse can I make? If I tell you I was writing a sonnet in your name, you would tell me we solace ourselves more materially and unfaithfully. If I said I feared my thousand rivals, you would not be likely to believe that any more. There is nothing for it but the truth."

"Well, tell it then."

"*Ma belle*, the truth will be that I was at Alvarina's *début* in *Rigoletto*, and supped afterwards with her and Rahel."

"Alvarina! that gaunt, brown Roman? and you call yourself fastidious, Ernest?" cried Madame la Comtesse.

"A gaunt, brown Roman,—Alvarina! The handsomest singer that ever crossed the Alps! So much for feminine prejudice," thought Chandos; but he knew the sex too well to utter his thoughts aloud.

"Pygmalion was nothing to you, Chandos," said Trevenna, swinging himself up the perch of the drag as a schoolboy up a tree, while the other men on it were owners of some of the highest coronets in Europe. There was this that was excellent and manly in this penniless man-upon-town; he never truckled to rank; peer or day-labourer alike heard his mind. "*He* put heart into a statue; *you've* put it into a woman of the world,—much the more difficult feat. Madame la Comtesse is positively jealous. I do believe she divines we are going to have Demi-Monde to dinner."

"Not she! she would not do me so much honour. But every woman has a heart, even the worst women,—though, to be sure, we forget it sometimes, till—we've broken them."

"Broken them? Poetic author of 'Lucrèce'! Hearts never break,—except as a good stroke of business, as sculptors knock a limb off a statue to make believe it's an antique. Every Musette we neglect vows her desertion is her death, but she soon sings *Resurgam* again, to the tune of the Cancan at the opera-ball."

"So much the happier for them, for we give them no *De Profundis!* There are exceptions to the Musette rule, though. I remember——"

"Don't trouble yourself with remembrance, Ernest. She soon supplied your place, take my word for it."

"My good fellow, no: she died."

"Not out of love for you! She had aneurism, or disease of the heart, or sat in a draught and caught cold, or ate too many cherries after dinner! There was a substantial basis for your picturesque hypothesis, I'll wager."

"Graceless dog! Have you never had a doubled-down page in your life?"

"I don't keep a diary; not even a mental one! Reminiscence is utterly unpractical and unphilosophical: agreeable, it dissatisfies ou with the present; disagreeable, it dissatisfies you with the past. . say, they are taking five to three on your chestnut at the Corner. : don't see what can beat you at Ascot. There's a good deal whispered about Lotus Lily: she's kept dark."

"They always train closely at Whitworth, but rarely bring out anything good. You are quite safe, Chandos," said His Grace of Ardennes, a gay, vivacious young fellow.

"Queen of the Fairies is the only thing that could have a chance with Galahad," put in the Duc de Luilhierès: "she has good breed in her by double strains; fine shoulders——"

"Leggy!" objected Trevenna, contemptuously, flatly contradict-

ing a peer of France. "Not well ribbed-up; weedy altogether. Chieftain was her sire, and he never did anything notable except to break a blood-vessel on the Beacon Course. The touts know what they're about, and they're all for the Clarencieux horse."

"Galahad will win if he be allowed," said Chandos. "Ah! there is Flora on the balcony; they are before us."

"I wish they weren't here at all!" cried Trevenna. "You should never have women to dinner; they shouldn't come till the olives. You can't appreciate the delicate *nuances* of a flavour if you are obliged to turn a compliment while you are eating it; and you never can tell whether a thing is done to a second, if, as you discuss it, you are pondering on the handsome flesh-tints of a living picture beside you. The presence of a woman disturbs that cool, critical acumen, that serene, divine beatitude, that should attend your dinner."

"Blasphemer!" cried Chandos. "As if one touch of some soft lips were not worth all Brillat-Savarin's science; what flavour would wine have if women's eyes didn't laugh over it? You King of Epicures! you'd adore a Vitellius, I believe, and hang Pausanias for his Spartan broth!"

"Certainly. A man who could capture Xerxes's cooks and not dine off their art deserved nothing less than the gallows; and Vitellius was a very sensible fellow; when he knew he must die he took care to finish his wine first. Hero *versus* Gourmet. Why not? Carême benefited France much more lastingly than Turenne; and Ude's done the world far more good than Napoleon. I'd rather have been the man who first found out that you must stuff a turkey with truffles than have won Austerlitz, any day. Your hero gets misjudged, blackguarded, whitewashed, over-rated, under-rated, just as the fit's hot or cold to him; but the man who once invents a perfect sauce is secure for all eternity. His work speaks for itself, and its judges are his apostles, who never name him without benediction. Besides, fancy the satisfaction to a cosmopolitan, amiable creature like myself, of knowing I'd prepared a delight for generations unborn!"

"Sublime apotheosis of gastronomy!" laughed Chandos, as he threw the ribbons to his groom before the doors of a summer villa at Richmond belonging to him, where most of these Bohemian dinners and suppers *à la Régence* were given; a charming place, half-covered in flowering trees and pyramids of May blossom; with glimpses of wood and water from its windows, and with the daintiest and cosiest banqueting-room in the world, hung with scarlet silk, drawn back here and there to show some beautiful female picture by Titian, Greuze, Regnault, or La Tour, large enough to hold twenty people, but small enough to feel *à huis clos* like a cabinet; with the air scented by dreamy incenses, and dishes and wines under the mellowed light that would have entranced even Lucullus had he been throned there on his ivory chair. Of this villa, and this banqueting-room, rumour ran high, accrediting its revelries as wild as Medmenham or as Bussy-Rabutin's "Abbey" of Roissy. They who told most precisely what positively took place there were, of

course, always those who had never been through its doors! And the world loved to take their stories with spice, and whisper unimaginable naughtiness of this pleasant *bonbonnière* of a villa buried away in its acacias and guelder roses and flowering chestnuts, where laughter rang out on to the young summer dawns, and beauty in *négligé* outshone all the jewelled beauty of courts.

"The art of life is—to enjoy!" cried Chandos, that night, lifting up to crown the sentiment a deep glass of glowing red Roussillon.

"Toast worthy of Lucullus and Ovid! and you are a master of the science," said John Trevenna, who was perhaps the only one who saw quite clearly through that intoxicating atmosphere of pastilles, and perfumes, and wines, and crushed flowers, and bruised fruits, and glancing tresses, and languid eyes, and lips fit for the hymns of a Catullus.

"He is the darling of the gods!" cried Flora de l'Orme, that magnificent Arlésienne, with her cheek like a peach in the sun, while she leaned over him and twisted, in the bright masses of his golden hair, a wreath of crimson roses washed in purple Burgundy.

Chandos shook the wine from the rose-crown as he bent and kissed that glowing Southern loveliness, and laughed under his diadem of flowers. The roses themselves were not brighter or more luxurious than the hours of life were to him.

He enjoyed! Oh, golden sum of this world's sweet content! Supreme truth of Faust; when he should

> "To the passing moment say,
> Stay! thou art so fair!"

then alone the philosopher knew that he could claim to have tasted happiness. When once we look back or look forward, then has the trail of the serpent been over our Eden. To enjoy, we must live in the instant we grasp.

It is so easy for the preacher, when he has entered the days of darkness, to tell us to find no flavour in the golden fruit, no music in the song of the charmer, no spell in eyes that look love, no delirium in the soft dreams of the lotus—so easy when these things are dead and barren for himself, to say they are forbidden! But men must be far more, or far less, than mortal ere they can blind their eyes, and dull their senses, and forswear their nature, and obey the dreariness of the commandment; and there is little need to force the sackcloth and the serge upon us. The roses wither long before the wassail is over, and there is no magic that will make them bloom again, for there is none that renews us—youth. The Helots had their one short, joyous festival in their long year of labour; life may leave us ours. It will be surely to us, long before its close, a harder tyrant and a more remorseless taskmaster than ever was the Lacedemonian to his bond-slaves,—bidding us make bricks without straw, breaking the bowed back, and leaving us as our sole chance of freedom the hour when we shall turn our faces to the wall—and die.

Once, some twenty years or more before, down at the stately pile of Clarencieux in the heart of the Devon woods, Philip Chandos

the great minister, had paused a moment where his young son leaned out of one of the painted oriel casements of the library, hanging with a child's faith and love over the eternal story of Arthur. The boy's arms were folded on the vellum pages, his head was drooped slightly forward in dreamy thought, and on his face came the look that there is in the portrait of Milton in his early years.

His father touched him on the shoulder.

"Where are your thoughts, Ernest?"

The child started a little.

"I was thinking what I shall be when I am a man."

"Indeed? And what will you be?"

"First, Chandos of Clarencieux!"

He could not have spoken with air more royal if he had said, "Augustus Imperator!"

"But besides?"

"Besides?" his voice fell lower, and grew swift and warmer, a little tremulous in its enthusiasm. "Why, I will be a poet and a statesman. I will have palaces like the Arabian Nights, and gather the people in them and make them happy. I will defend all the guiltless and protect all the weak, like King Arthur. I will rule men, but by love, not fear; and I will make my name great,—so great that when I die they will only write 'Chandos' on my grave, and the name will tell the world its own tale!"

They were strange words; and, where he leaned against the oriel, the light from the setting autumn sun fell full upon his face, deepening there the lofty and spiritual exaltation of thoughts too far above his years. His father looked at him, and something that was almost a sigh passed the haughty lips of the great minister. The sigh was for the future of those heroic and pure ambitions, for the world which would break them as surely as the pressure of the iron roller crushes out the flowers of spring. And he could not utter to the child, in the proud gladness of his young faith, the warning that rose to his own lips: "Keep those dreams for other worlds, for they will never find fruition here."

Yet, for the boy to whom these dreams came, untaught and instinctive, in all their superb impossibility, their divine unreality, his father could not but hope himself a future and an ambition still loftier than his own.

"The darling of the gods!" said Flora de l'Orme, to-night, as she wound the crown of scarlet roses in her lover's hair; and she had said very truly. Fortune and the world never combined to flatter any man more than they combined to shower all gifts and graces on Ernest Chandos. When he had been but a child in his laces and velvets, princes had tossed him bonbons and royal women caressed his loveliness. Tutors, parasites, servants, indulged all his fancies, and never controlled or contradicted him. At Eton, nicknamed the Dauphin, he bore all before him, was noted for his champagne breakfasts, and had a duke for his devoted fag. At seventeen he was his own master. His father died grandly as Chatham, falling back, without a sigh or struggle, after one of the finest

speeches of his life, in the full career of his magnificent and fearless leadership. The boy's grief was intense, both passionate and enduring, for he had worshipped his father and his father's fame. By his own wish he went abroad: he would not hear of a college. His only guardian was his grandfather by the distaff-side, the Duke of Castlemaine, an old soldier and statesman of the Regency time: his mother had died years before. The Duke let him do precisely as he chose, which was to remain abroad four years, chiefly in the East, where life, whether waiting for the lion's or leopard's step through the sultry hush of an Oriental night, or learning soft love-lore from the dark eyes of a Georgian under the shadows of a palm-grove, enchanted and enchained one who, whatever after-years might make him, was in his youth only a poet, and a lover of all fair things,—especially of the fairness of women. Life seemed to conspire to idolise him and to ruin him: after a boyhood of limitless indulgence, limitless tenderness, and limitless enjoyment, he passed to the enervating, poetic, picturesque, sensuousness of life in the Eastern nations, where every breath was a perfume, every day was a poem, and every lovely face was a captive's, to be bought at pleasure. He returned, to become the idol of a fashionable world. His beauty, his wit, his genius, that showed itself, half capriciously, half indolently, in glittering *jeux d'esprit*, his generosity, that scattered wealth to whoever asked, the magnificence of his entertainments,—these became the themes of the most exclusive and most seductive of worlds; and while men cited him to the echo, with women he had only to love and he had won. He was the comet of his horizon, and fashion streamed after him.

Some romances, and some poems, were traced to him,—dazzling, vivid, full of glowing, if sometimes extravagant, fancy, and of that easy grace which is only heaven-born in authors or in artists. They were raved of in Paris and London; he found himself twice famous, by literature and by fashion; and his invitation was far more courted than one to Windsor or the Tuileries: *those* only conferred rank, *his* gave a far higher and subtler distinction,—fashion.

For the rest, his fortune was large, his estates of Clarencieux were as noble as any in England, and he had a house in Park Lane, an hotel in the Champs Elysées, a toy villa at Richmond, and a summer-palace on the Bosphorus; and, costly as were both his pleasures and his art-tastes, even those did not cost him so much as a liberality that none ever applied to in vain, a liberality that was the only thing in his life he strove to conceal, and that aided men of talent to a fair field, or lifted them from the slough of narrowed fortunes, by a hand that often was unseen by them, that always gave, when compelled to give openly, with a charm that banished all humiliation from the gift.

Thus was Chandos now.

How far had he borne out his childish promise of the night in Westminster? He could not have told himself. He was the most dazzling leader, the most refined voluptuary, the most splendid patron, the most courted man, of his times; and in the soft ease,

the lavished wealth, the unclouded successes of his present, he asked and heeded no more. He was at the height of brilliant renown, and not even a doubled rose-leaf broke his rest.

"Who ever said that we cannot love two at once? It is the easiest thing in the world to love half a dozen; to love but *one* were to show a shocking lack of appreciation of nature's fairest gifts. Constancy is the worst possible compliment a blockhead can pay to the *beau sexe*," thought Chandos, the next morning, as he breakfasted, glancing through a pile of scented delicate notes, cream, rose, *pale tendre*, and snow-white, perfumed with various fragrance, but all breathing one tone. Woman had done their uttermost to force him into vanity from his childhood, when queens had petted him. Women always coax their favourites into ruin if they can. His temper chanced to be such that they had entirely failed. Of his personal beauty Chandos never thought more than he thought of the breath he drew.

It was twelve o'clock as he took his chocolate in his dressing-room, a chamber fit for a young princess, with its azure hangings, its Russian cabinets, and its innumerable flowers. Perfumes and female beauty were his two special weaknesses, as they were Mahomet's. He was a man of pleasure, be it remembered, with the heart of a poet and the eyes of a painter,—a combination to make every temptation tenfold more tempting.

"Cool you look here!" cried a resonant, lively, clear voice, telling as a trumpet-call, as that privileged person John Trevenna pushed lightly past a valet and made his way into the chamber.

"My dear fellow! Delighted to see you. Come to breakfast?"

"Breakfast? Had it hours ago, and done no end of business since. We poor devils, you know, are obliged to walk about the streets in the noonday; it's only you *grands seigneurs* who can lie in the shade doing nothing. Peaches, grapes, chocolate, and claret for your breakfast! How French you are! The public wouldn't think you a safe member of society if they knew you didn't take the orthodox British under-done chop and slice of bacon virtually undistinguishable from shoe-leather. I wonder what you *would* do if you were a poor man, Ernest?"

Chandos laughed and gave a shudder. "Do! glide away in a dose of morphia. Poor! I can't *fancy* it, even."

Trevenna smiled as he tossed himself into the softest lounging-chair. *He* had known what poverty was,—known it in its ugliest, its blackest, its barest, and had learned to hate it with a loathing, unutterable, and thoroughly justified; for poverty is the grimmest foe the world holds, a serpent that stifles talent ere talent can rise, that blasts genius ere genius can be heard, that sows hot hate by a cold hearth, and that turns the germ of good into the giant of evil.

"Trevenna," went on Chandos, taking one of his hot-house peaches, "who was that new beauty at the Duc's yesterday? I never saw anything lovelier."

"There are twenty new beauties this season,—in their own estimation, at least! Be a little more explicit, please."

"She was with the Chesterton. Really beautiful; beautiful as

a Giorgione. There were plenty of men about her. I should have asked who she was, and have been presented to her, but I had no time to stay, even for her."

"With the Chesterton? Why, Ivors's daughter, of course."

"Ivors? Died last year, didn't he?—of losing the Guineas, they said, to the French colt. Why haven't I seen her before?"

"Because she has been in Rome. She's *the* thing of the year is my Lady Valencia. You'll see her at the Drawing Room to-morrow," said Trevenna. He was a walking court-newsman and fashionable directory, being able to tell you at a second's notice who was at the bottom of the St. Leger scandal about the powder in Etoile's drinking-water, what divorces were in train, what amatory passages great ladies confided to their Bramah-locked diaries, and whose loose paper was flying about most awkwardly among the Jews. "I noticed you looked at her yesterday," he pursued: "so did the Countess. She's fearfully jealous of you! Take care you don't get a note chemically perfumed à la Brinvilliers. I wonder what on earth she would do if you were ever to marry!"

"Shrug her pretty shoulders, pity my wife, and console me, to be sure. But I shall never try her. Twenty years hence, perhaps, if I have nothing better to do, and ever see the woman of my ideal——"

> "That impossible she,
> Wherever she be,
> In meerschaum dreams of fantasie!"

paraphrased Trevenna. "What a queer idea, to be longing for ideal women when there are all the living ones at your service! That *is* preferring the shadow to the substance. What can you want that Flora and all the rest have not?"

Chandos laughed, nestling in among the cushions of his sofa at full length. "My dear Trevenna, it would be talking in Arabic to you to tell you. Indeed, you'd understand the Sanscrit much quicker, you most material of men."

"Certainly I am material! A material man dines well and digests well. A visionary man enjoys his banquet of the soul, and has a deuced deal of neuralgia after it. Which were best?—Lucullus's cherry-trees, or Lucullus's conquests? The victories are no good to anybody now. Asia and Europe have been mapped out again twenty times; but cherry brandy will last as long as the world lasts. Conquerors supplant each other like mushrooms, but cherry tarts are perennial and eternal as long as generations are born to go to school. Material! Of course I am. Which enjoyed life best,—your grand *summum bonum*?—Dante, or Falstaff? Milton, or Sir John Suckling?"

"And which does posterity revere?"

"Posterity be shot! If I pick the bones of ortolans in comfort while I am alive, what does it matter to me how people pick my bones after I'm gone? A dish of truffles or terrapin to tickle my palate is a deal more to my taste than a wreath of *immortelles* hung on my grave. I detest posterity; every king hates his heir;

but I dearly love a good dinner. If I could choose what should become of my bones, I'd have myself made into gelatine; gelatine's such a rascally cheat, and assists at such capital banquets, it's the most appropriate final destiny for any human being that was ever devised. But what's the good of my talking to you? We look at life through different glasses."

"Rather!"

"A disdainful enough dissyllable. Well, we shall see which is best content of us two, after all,—I, the animal man, or you, the artistic. You've tremendous odds in your favour. I shall deserve great honour if I make any head against you."

A shadow passed slightly over the face of Chandos; he had the variable and impressionable temperament of a poetic nature, a deep thoughtfulness, even to melancholy, mingled in contrast with the gayest and most nonchalant epicureanism.

"Content? at the end? How is it to be secured? Æmilianus led a noble and glorious life,—to fall by an assassin's dagger. Ovid led the gayest and the brightest life,—to go out to the frozen misery of Pannonia. Africanus was a hero,—to be accused of stealing the public money. Petronius was an epicurean,—to die by a lingering torture."

Trevenna laughed as he took a cigar from a case standing near, lighted it, and rose.

"Hang Petronius! It could have been no fun to torment him. the fellow died so game,—wouldn't *wince* once! As for the end of the farce we play in,

> "'Tis not in mortals to *deserve* success;
> But you'll do more, Sempronius; you'll *command* it!'

I like that mis-quotation. Only 'deserve' success, and I should like to know who'll give you your deserts! But I must go. There are no end of poor devils waiting outside: working authors and working jewellers; mute, inglorious Miltons, and glorious, talkative tailors; dealers with cracked antiques, and poets with cracked novelties; sculptors with their bronzes, and young Chattertons with their brass——I beg pardon, I forgot! one mustn't laugh at genius, even in a shabby coat, here."

"No: Le Sage had no coat on in his attic when he refused the millionnaire's bribe. 'Tout compte fait, je suis plus riche que vous, et je refuse!'"

"And you think that sublime? to tell the truth and starve? Faugh! I'd have taken their cheque, and written a ten times more stinging *Turcaret* afterwards! But, on my word, Chandos, your ante-rooms are as thronged as any Chesterfield's or Halifax's of a hundred years ago."

"Nonsense! There is no patronage nowadays. A man makes himself."

"Pardon me, his bank-balance makes him! If it be heavy enough, it will cover all sins,—intellectual, moral, and grammatical,—and float him as high as heaven. Well, what are your commands

to-day? I know what to do about securing those *genre* pictures, and I'm now going to the Corner to see what the mid-day betting is for us; and I sent the *cabochon* emeralds to Mademoiselle Flora, and grudged her them heartily; and I have seen to the enlarging of the smoking-room of the *Anadyomene*. Anything else?"

"My dear fellow, no; I think not, I thank you. Unless—— they tell me there are some good things in Della Robbia at the Vere collection: you might look at them, if you don't mind the trouble; buy, if they are really perfect. And bring me word round, if you can learn, what houses this daughter of Ivors will show at to-night. I never saw a lovelier face; but there is a quality above beauty that probably she has not. Rahel is not absolutely handsome; but that woman has such sorcery in her that you could not be ten minutes with her without being in love."

With which tribute to the great actress's power, Chandos, a connoisseur in female charms, from those of a Greek grape-girl to those of a Tuileries princess, from the grace of a Bayadère to the glamour of a Rosière, resumed his purpose of glancing through the innumerable little amorous notes that accompanied his breakfast, while Trevenna sauntered out, pausing a moment to put in his head at the door—

"I lamed my horse over that wretched heap of stones in Bolton Row. May I use one of your horses?"

"My dear fellow, what a question! My stables are yours, of course."

And John Trevenna went out on his morning's work. He called himself a business-man; but what his business was, beyond being prime minister, master of the horse, and chancellor of the exchequer to Chandos, and knowing all the news before anybody else whispered it, was what was never altogether ascertained. Be his business what it might, in amusement Trevenna brought his own welcome to every one; and he entertained Society so well that Society was always ready to entertain him.

Society, that smooth and sparkling sea, is excessively difficult to navigate; its surf looks no more than champagne foam, but a thousand quicksands and shoals lie beneath; there are breakers ahead for more than half the dainty pleasure-boats that skim their hour upon it; and the foundered lie by millions, forgotten, five fathoms deep below. The only safe ballast upon it is gold dust; and if stress of weather come on you it will swallow you without remorse. Trevenna had none of this ballast; he had come out to sea in as ticklish a cockle-shell as might be; he might go down any moment, and he carried no commission, being a sort of nameless, unchartered rover: yet float he did, securely.

Twelve years before, one hot night at Baden, a penniless young Englishman had lost more than he had in his purse,—had, indeed, in the world; the bank arrested him; his prospect for life was to anguish in German prisons, the prey of the debts which he could not liquidate and none else would pay for him. For he was alone in life, and had, for all he knew, not a solitary friend upon the face of the earth. A boy of twenty, throwing his gold about to the

enchantress of Play, heard the story, paid the debts, and freed the debtor. The boy was Chandos, the young master of Clarencieux. It was the last dilemma into which astute John Trevenna ever let life betray him; and it was his first step towards social success. His boy-benefactor was not content with letting his good services begin and end at the prison of the duchy: he made the prisoner his guest then and there. He was infinitely amused, too, with a companion sufficiently near his own age to enter into all his pleasures, and who was the first person he had ever met who told him the truth with frank good nature and never annoyed him by flattery. From that day, through Chandos, John Trevenna was welcomed in the World; and the World soon kept him in it as a sort of Town Triboulet.

He was a privileged person: every one knows how immense a *carte blanche* is given by those words. Chandos was the fashion; he pleased himself by doing all good services to Trevenna that circumstances would allow of; and the world petted Trevenna because Chandos befriended him. He lived so very near the rose that much of the tender dews so lavishly poured down on the king flower fell of necessity upon him. He was often rude, always brusque, *sans façon*, sometimes even a little coarse; but he was so frank, so imperturbably good-humoured, told stories so admirably, and had such a thorough spice of true wit, that he was as good with wine as anchovies or olives, and men had him with their wine accordingly. Was a château dull on the shores of Monaco or Baiæ, or a country-house dull in the recesses; was there a dearth of news in a hot club-room at the fag-end of a season, was the conversation dragging wearily over an aristocratic dinner-table; or was a duke half dead of *ennui* in the midst of a great gathering, the bright, laughing face of John Trevenna, with the white teeth glancing in a merry, honest smile, always fresh, never faded, never bored, but always looking, because always feeling, as if life were the pleasantest comedy that could be played, was the signal of instant relief and of instant amusement. The legions of blue-devils flew before his approach, and no *ennui* could withstand the tonic of his caustic humour and his incessant mirth.

Even His Grace of Castlemaine, haughtiest of Garter knights, most hard to please of all Regency wits,—even that splendid old man, who had set his face against this stray member of society, could not altogether withstand him.

"Chandos' *homme d'affaires?* An interloper, sir, an adventurer, and I detest adventurers:—tell you a first-rate story, make you a first-rate *mot*, but always have a second king in their sleeve for your *écarté!* Society's a soil you can't *weed* too vigorously. Still, a humorous fellow, I must confess; a clever fellow,—very."

So John Trevenna had laughed his way into the world, and, laughing, held his own there. No one ever heard the story of the Baden debts from Chandos, but Trevenna openly confessed himself a poor man; he never teased people with reminding them of it, but stated the fact once for all without disguise. He made a little money on the turf, and doubled that little now and then by in-

genious traffic here and there in the commercial gambling that the world sanctifies; but nobody knew this. He was simply a man-upon-town. He lived very inexpensively, dining out every night of his life; he had no vices; he was an epicure, but that taste he only indulged at other people's tables; and he had no weakness for women: if you had offered him a beautiful mistress or a dozen of Imperial Tokay, he would without hesitation have taken the Tokay.

As regarded his intellect, he had talent enough to be anything,—from a jockey to an ambassador, from a head cook to a premier.

"The Queen of Lilies will be at the Dos Vaux to-night, Chandos," said he, that evening, in the green drawing-room at Park Lane, where, some dozen guests having dined with him, including S.A.R. the Duc de Neuilly, and H.S.H. the Prince Carl of Steinberg, Chandos was now playing at *baccarat*, half a hundred engagements being thrown over, as chanced inevitably with him every night in the season. Trevenna himself was not playing; he never touched cards at any game except whist, which he had studied as—what it is—a science. He stood on the hearth-rug, looking on, taking now and then a glass of Moselle or Maraschino from a console near.

"What a charming name,—The Queen of Lilies! Who is she?" asked his host, having already forgotten the commission he gave.

"The Queen of Lilies? Ah, she is exquisite! you have not seen her, of course, Ernest?" asked the French prince. "The Laureate gave her the title."

"In a sonnet, made instantly public by being marked Private. If you want a piece of news to fly over Europe like lightning, whisper it as a secret that would infallibly destroy you if it ever got wind," put in Trevenna, who among princes and peers never could keep his tongue still.

"But who is she? A new dancer, I hope. We have nothing good in the *coulisses*."

"A dancer? No! She is Ivors' daughter."

"Ah! I remember, I saw her yesterday. The Queen of Lilies, do you call her? The name is an idyl!"

"Ah!" said his Grace of Crowndiamonds, with a cross between an oath and a regret. "She is a great deal too handsome!"

"Too handsome? How charming a blemish! They generally sin the other way, my dear Crown."

"Too handsome; for—she is ice!"

"Never find fault with women, old fellow! We may all of us think that each of those dainty treasures has a flaw somewhere; but we should never hint a doubt of them, any more than of their Dresden."

"Though the best Dresden is only soiled earth, just painted and glazed!" broke in Trevenna, taking out his watch. "You told me to learn where she went. At nine she dined with the French Ambassador; at twelve she was at Livingstone House; at one she was at Lady Bellingham's; and now, fifty-five minutes past one, she is at the Countess des Vaux's."

"Do you find out everything, Monsieur Trevenna?" laughed the French duc.

Trevenna looked at him with a certain saucy triumph in his bold Saxon-blue eyes—blue as forget-me-nots, and keen as a knife.

"Yes, monseigneur—if I wish."

The answer was quiet, and, wonderful for him, without a jest; but the prince turned and gave him a more earnest look than he had ever bestowed on this *flâneur*, this *rôdeur* of the English clubs.

"He will be a successful man, a great man, ten to one, when our brilliant Chandos, who has the genius of a Goethe, will have died of dissipation or have killed himself for some mistress's infidelity," thought the duke, a keen man of the world, while his eyes glanced from the sagacious, indomitable, fresh-coloured face of Trevenna to the delicate, proud, dazzling beauty of Chandos, with the light in his deep-blue eyes and the laughter on his insouciant lips.

"We should all of us have been at those places, if your *baccarat* had not beguiled us, Chandos," said the Comte de la Joie; "but social entertainments are a crying cruelty."

"And a great mistake. Society is ruined by the *rôture*, which has nothing to recommend its entertainments but the cooking, and has made the cooking the measure of the entertainments. St. Fond's verdict of English banquets remains true to the letter: 'Ils se saoulèrent grandement et se divertirent moult tristement!'"

"Oh, we all know what you are, Chandos," cried Trevenna. "You'd exchange your own cook—though he is priceless, were it only for his soups—to be able to eat a dried date with Plato, and would give up White's for the Scipionic circle or the Mermaid evenings!"

"Perhaps. Though I admit you are a more practical philosopher than any in Academus, and are as good a companion as Lucilius or Ben Jonson."

"I hope I am," said Trevenna, complacently. "I bet you the philosophers flavoured their dates, as we do our olives, by discussing Lalage's ankles and the Agora gossip. Scipio talked fine, we know; Lucilius laughed at him for it, and fine talkers are always bores; and as for the Mermaid—Raleigh whispered wicked things of the maids of honour, and Shakspeare wondered what old Combe would leave him in his will, and Ben joked him about the Crown Inn widow over mulled posset. The Immortals were as mortal as we are, every whit."

With which Trevenna washed down their immortality by a glass of golden water.

"Shall we all go and criticise this Lily Queen, Chandos?" asked the Duc de Neuilly. "She will not be believed in till you have given her the *cordon* of your approbation."

Prince Carl was willing, the *baccarat* was deserted, and they went to the crowded rooms of the Countess des Vaux.

"There she is!" said Neuilly, on the staircase, that was still thronged.

She was beautiful as a young deer, and had something of the

stag's lofty grace. Her eyes were a deep brown, large, thoughtful, proud, swept by lashes a shade darker still; her lips were sweet as half-opened roses; her hair, the same hue as her eyes, was drawn back in soft floating masses from a brow like a Greek antique; she was very tall, and her form was simply perfect. It was in its fullest loveliness, too, for she had been some years in Rome, and successive deaths in her family had kept her long in almost comparative seclusion.

"You said she was cold! Such beauty as that can never be passionless," said Chandos.

As though his voice had reached her through the long distance that severed them, she turned her head at that moment, and their eyes met.

Corals, pink and delicate, rivet continents together; ivy tendrils, that a child may break, hold Norman walls with bonds of iron; a little ring, a toy of gold, a jeweller's bagatelle, forges chains heavier than the galley-slave's: so a woman's look may fetter a lifetime.

"Passionless! with those eyes? Impossible!" said Chandos.

"Oh, she will have two passions," said Crowndiamonds, dryly—"two very strong passions—vanity and ambition!"

"For shame!" laughed Chandos. "Never be cynical upon women, Crown. It is breaking butterflies upon the wheel, and shooting humming-birds with field-pieces. Well, let the Lily Queen's sins be what they may, she is lovely enough to make us forgive them."

And he made his way at last into the rooms with the French and English dukes, to be detained right and left, and make his further way with difficulty into his hostess's presence.

When he was at all free, and sought to look for the Queen of Lilies, he found that she had left.

"I shall see her at the Drawing-Room," thought Chandos, whom too many were ever ready to console, for him ever to be left to regret an absent loveliness. Men of his temperament, the temperament of Goethe, are incessantly accused of inconstancy, because the list of their loves is long. On the contrary, they are most constant—to their own ideal, which they unceasingly pursue in every form which has its outward semblance. What their dreams long for is not there—in that beautiful shadow that looked so like it, but which was but a transparency, only bright through borrowed light; then they cease to love till again they pursue a shadow; and fools call them libertines.

That night, or rather in the dawn, Heloïse, Countess de la Vivarol, looked at her own face in the mirror, while her attendants were taking the sapphires and onyxes from her hair. It was well worth looking at, with its glancing falcon radiance of regard, its indescribable witchery of coquetry, and its rich, delicate tints, independent, as yet, even of pearl-powder. Her mother was the Princesse Lucille Viardort, who had married an English baronet; her father none was ever so bold as to name,—the baronet himself put in no claim for her; he lived apart from his wife, who was a handsome,

sunny, good-tempered creature, as happy in the midst of the slander to which she gave rise, as a sea-anemone in a rock pool. It was her normal element: the Viardort, that restless and dominant race who had played at bowls with nothing less than all the rolling diadems of Europe, always had scandalised the world ever since they burst, meteor-like, upon it. All the Viardort love sovereignty, and get it, though none are born to it. Heloïse, who at sixteen had married the Count Granier de la Vivarol, was not behind her race. She plunged eagerly, up to her lovely throat, in European intrigues, —so eagerly that she was now banished from France. Her lord did not follow her,—there lives not the man who could prefer a wife to Paris,—but allowed her richly, so richly, indeed, that she never called him anything worse than "*ce petit drôle*" when speaking of him in connection with her money-matters. With any other affairs he never came under discussion.

Before her banishment from Paris, Chandos, at the same time with herself, had been among the First Circle of autumn guests at Compiègne. In the torchlight *curées*, in the moon-lit terraces, in the palace theatricals, in the forest hunts, she had fascinated him, he had attracted her. M. le Comte was a thoroughly well-bred man, who knew the destinies of husbands, abhorred a scene, and neither sought a duel nor a divorce: besides, he was not at the court. Their love-passages went silvery smooth, and were quite a page out of Boccaccio. Now Madame was disposed to be jealous, and Chandos was a little disposed to be tired. Studies after Boccaccio often end thus,—in bathos.

To-night she looked at her face in her mirror, and her tiny white teeth clenched like a little lion-dog's. Perhaps the love she had taught mercilessly so often had revenged itself here on its teacher; perhaps it was but pique that made her so tenacious to keep the sway she had held over the handsomest man of his age; be the spring love, vanity, passion, or envy, what it would, her eyes glittered with a dangerous gleam under her curling lashes, and she muttered, between her set teeth—

"If he ever love another, if it be twenty years hence——"

CHAPTER III.

A PRIME MINISTER AT HOME.

Over and over again John Trevenna had been pressed to take up residence in the stately suites of the Park Lane house; but this he had always refused. He dined there, lunched there, ordered what he chose there, and stayed for months each year at Clarencieux; but he had his own rooms in town, in a quiet street near the clubs. He liked to retain a distinct personality. Besides, people came to see him here who could never have shown themselves before the porter of the great leader of fashion; men with bulldog heads and close-cut hair, known as "sporting gents;" men with the glance of a ferret and the jewellery of Burlington Arcade, utterly and un-

mistakably "horsy;" men who always had "a lovely thing close by in the mews,—go in your 'and, and only thirty sovs.," to sell, but who traded in many things besides toy terriers; men very soberly dressed, hard-featured, hard-headed members of trades-unions; men with long floating beards, the look of Burschen, and "artist" written on them for those who ran to read, without the paint-splashes on their coats; men with clean-shaven faces or white pointed beards, but, shaven or hirsute, Israelites to the bone: all these varieties, and many more came to see Trevenna, who could never have gone into the hall of the fastidious and patrician Chandos.

On the surface, Trevenna had but one set of friends, his aristocratic acquaintances of the clubs and the Clarendon dinners; *sub rosa*, this bright Bohemian was thoroughly versed in every phase and, indeed, every sink of London life and of human nature. It was "his way" to know everybody,—it might be of use some day; he went now—in the same spirit of restless activity and indomitable perseverance which had made him as a boy ask the meaning of every machine and the tricks of every trade that he passed—to the probing of every problem and the cementing of every brick in life. The multitudes whom he knew were countless; the histories he had fathomed were unrecordable. Men were the pawns, knights, bishops, and castles of Trevenna's chess, and he set himself to win the game with them, never neglecting the smallest, for a pawn sometimes gives checkmate.

Trevenna sat now at breakfast early in the morning,—half-past eight, indeed,—though he had not been in bed until four. He slept the sound, sweet, peaceful sleep of a child, and very little of that profound repose sufficed for him. His rooms were scrupulously neat, but bare of everything approaching art or decoration; Chandos could not have lived a day in them, if he had been a poor man; condemned to them, he would have hung an engraving here, or a cast from the antique there, that would have gone some way to redeem them in their useful ugliness. Trevenna was utterly indifferent to that ugliness; as far as his eyes went, he would have been as happy in a garret as in a palace.

His breakfast was only coffee and a chop; he exercised the strictest economy in his life. It was not, to be sure, very painful to him; for he had the run of all the wealthiest houses in England, and was welcomed to every table. Still, it was significant of the man that, well as he liked all gourmets' delicacies, he never by any chance squandered money on them, and if he had to go without them from year's end to year's end, never would have done. Naturally he was very self-indulgent, but he had schooled himself into considerable control.

The coffee was something rough, the chop was something tough,—English cookery pure; but Trevenna, who would know to a T what was wanting in the flavour of a white sauce at the best club in Pall Mall, and who could appreciate every finest shade in the most masterly art of the Park Lane *chef*, took both chop and coffee without a murmur. In the first place, he had the good appetite of a

thoroughly healthy and vigorous constitution; in the second, he would compensate himself by the daintiest and most delicious of noon *déjeûners* at Chandos' house.

While he ate and drank he was looking at some memoranda, and talking to a man before him,—a man who stood before him as an inferior before his employer; a tall man, lean, venerable, saturnine, with iron-grey hair that floated on his shoulders like a patriarch, and down his chest in a waving beard,—a man in his sixtieth year, with his shoulders a little bowed, and his hands lightly clasped in front of him.

This was Ignatius Mathias, of the firm of Tindall & Co., which firm was well known Citywards, in a little, dark, crooked, stifling lane, where their dusky, sullen-looking, rickety door was only too familiar to men in the Guards, men in Middle Temple, men in the Commons, and men in nothing at all but a fashionable reputation and a cloud of debts. Tindall & Co. dealt in damaged paper chiefly; they bought up most of the awkward things that floated in the market, and, it was said, were making a great deal of money. This was but guess-work, however, for the little grimy den of an office told no secrets, however many it guarded; and who was Tindall, and who were Co., was a thing never known; the only person ever seen, ever found there as responsible, was Ignatius Mathias, a Castilian Jew, and most people considered that he was the Firm; they never were surer on this point than when he shook his head gravely and said he "could but act on his instructions; his principal had been very positive: his principal could not wait."

But, be this as it might, Ignatius Mathias was no common Jew lender; he never sought to palm off a miserable home-smoked Rembrandt, a cracked violin christened a Straduarius, or a case of wretched marsala called madeira, on a customer. Tindall & Co. had none of these tricks; they simply did business, and if they did it in a very severe manner, if when they had sucked their orange dry they threw the peel away, something cruelly, into the mud, they still only did business thoroughly legitimately, thoroughly strictly. Their customers might curse them with terrible bitterness, as the head and root of their destruction, but they could never legally complain of them.

"Sit down, Mathias; sit down, and pour yourself out a cup of coffee," said Trevenna. "I'll run my eyes through these papers; and when you have drunk your coffee, be able to account me the receipts of the month. I know what they should be; we'll see what they are."

"You will find them correct, sir," said Mathias, meekly; "and I need no coffee, I thank you."

Neither did he take the proffered seat; he remained standing, his dark brooding eyes dwelling on the parchment-bound receipt-book open before him.

The papers supplied the sauce which was wanting to Trevenna's underdone mutton; as he glanced through them, his humorous lips laughed silently every now and then, and his light-blue, cloudless, dauntless eyes sparkled with a suppressed amusement. These

papers, and their like, brought him as keen a pleasure and excitation as other men find in a fox-hunt or a deer-drive; it was the chase, and without the fatigue of dashing over bullfinches or watching in sloppy weather for the quarry; it was a *battue* into which all the game was driven ready to hand,—through and through under the fire of the guns. The beaters had all the trouble; the marksman all the sport.

"Chittenden:—dined with him at the Star and Garter last Thursday: we'll soon stop those dinners, my boy. Bertie Brabazon:—oh! he's going to be married to the Rosefleck heiress: better let *him* alone. Grey Græme:—who would have thought of *his* being in Queer Street? Jemmy Haughton:—little fellow,—barrister,—got a bishop for an uncle,—bishop will bleed,—won't see him screwed; Church hates scandals,—especially when it's in lawn sleeves. Talbot O'Moore—Wareley—Belminster——Very good,—very good," murmured Trevenna over details of paper floating about town, that those whom it otherwise concerned would have rather characterised, on the contrary, as very bad. He meditated a little while over the memoranda,—amused meditation that washed down the flavourless coarseness of his breakfast; then he thrust his breakfast-cup awry, pocketed the lists, and went steadily to business. Not that he looked grave, dull, or absorbed even in that; he was simply bright, intelligent, and alert, as he was in a ducal smoking-room, but Ignatius Mathias knew that those sagacious, sparkling glances would have discovered the minutest flaw in his finance, and that the man who listened so lightly, with a briar-wood pipe between his lips, and his elbows resting on the mantel-piece, would have been down on him like lightning at the slightest attempt to blind or to cheat one who was keener even than that keen Israelite.

"All right," said Trevenna, as, having come to the completion of his monthly accounts, the Portuguese closed his book and waited for instructions. Trevenna never wasted words over business, rapidly as he chatted over dinner-tables and in club-rooms; and Ignatius and he understood each other. "You take care to keep Tindall & Co. dark, eh?"

"Every care, sir."

"Encourage them to think *you* Tindall & Co. by the charming and expressive character of your denial, your inflexible austerity, your constant references to your principal. The more you refer to him, you know, the more they'll be sure that he doesn't exist. Everybody takes it for granted that a Jew lies."

There was a cheerful, easy serenity in the tone, as though uttering the pleasantest compliment possible, that made them sound all the more cutting, all the more heartless; yet they were spoken with such happy indifference.

The Jew's dark and hollow cheek flushed slightly: he bent his head.

"I observe all your commands, sir."

"Of course you do," said Trevenna, carelessly. "The first you disobey will set the police after Young Hopeful. Tell him it's no

use to hide: I know he's at that miserable little Black Forest village now. He may just as well come and walk about London. He can't escape *me.* When I want him, I shall put my hand on him if he buries himself under a Brazilian forest; *you* know that."

A change came over the unmovable, impassive form of the Castilian,—a change that shook him suddenly from head to foot, as a reed trembles in the wind. What little blood there was in his dark, worn face forsook it; a look of hunted and terrible anguish came into his eyes. With the long-suffering patience of his race, no outburst of passion or of entreaty escaped him; but his lips were dry as bones as he murmured faintly, "Sir, sir, be merciful! I serve faithfully; I will give my body night and day to redeem the lad's sin."

Trevenna laughed lightly.

"That's the compact. Keep it, and I don't touch the boy," he said curtly.

"You are very good, sir."

"You may go now," said Trevenna, with a nod. "You know what to do in all cases; and don't forget to put the screw on to Fotheringay at once. The next time come a little earlier,—seven or so; if I'm in bed, I'll see you. It's rather dangerous when people are about; your visits might get blown on. All *my* people—the dainty gentlemen—are never up till noonday, it's true; but their servants might be about. At all events, 'safe bind, safe find.' They might wonder what I borrowed money of you for; it would hurt my character."

He laughed gaily and merrily over the words; they tickled his fancy. The Jew bowed reverentially to him, gathered up his papers, and left the room.

"The best organisations are sure to have a flaw," thought Trevenna, leaning there still with his elbows on the mantel-piece, smoking meditatively. "Now, there is that Jew; marvellous clever fellow, shrewd, got head enough to be a finance-minister; grind a man as well as anybody can; take you in most neatly; a magnificent machine altogether for cheating, and hard as a flint; and yet that Jew's such a fool over his worthless young rascal of a son that you can turn him round your finger through it. *There* he's as soft as an idiot and as blind as a bat. Incomprehensible that a man can let such trash creep into him! It's very odd, men have so many weaknesses; I don't think I've got one."

He had one; but, like most men, he did not imagine it was weakness, and in truth it was not a very tender one, though it was very dominant

"Not at home to all the dukes in the world, my dear, till twelve," said he, as the maid-servant of his lodgings (he kept no man-servant of any kind, except a miniature tiger to hang on behind his tilbury) cleared away the breakfast-service. That done, Trevenna sat down to a table strewn with blue-books, books on political economy, books on population and taxation, books on government, books English, French, German, and American, all tending to the same direction of study.

He certainly did not need to ponder over the statistics of nations to conduct his affairs with Ignatius Mathias, however intricate they were, and he had received every benefit that a first-rate education can confer. But he was one of those wise men who remember that the longest and most learned life, spent aright, never ceases to learn till its last breath is drawn; and, moreover, far away in limitless perspective in Trevenna's ambitions lay an arena where the victory is not to the strong, nor the race to the swift, but to the ablest tactician in such rare instances as it departs from the hereditary winners,—an arena where adventurers are excluded as utterly as men of the foreign states, though they were princes, were excluded from the games of Elis. So for three hours and a half that idle, gossiping *flâneur*, that town-jester whom the town called Chandos' Chicot, plunged himself deep into political subtleties, and the science of statecraft, and the close logic of finance, bringing to their problems a head which grew only clearer the tougher the problem it clenched, the deeper the ground it explored. Hard study was as thorough a revelry to Trevenna as plunging into the cool, living water is to a great swimmer. Like the swimmer, his heart beat joyously as he dived only to rise again the fresher and the bolder. Like the swimmer, his soul rose triumphant as he felt and he measured his strength.

Twelve struck.

He, who was as punctual as if he were made by clockwork, got up, changed his dress in ten minutes, and rang for his tilbury to be brought round. "I will indemnify myself for my ascetic chop in Park Lane, but I will see how the wind is blowing for Sir Galahad at the Corner first," thought Trevenna; and thither he went.

The mid-day betting was eager, for it was within a month of the Ascot week. "The gentlemen" were barely out yet; but the book-makers were mustered in full force, from the small speculators, who usually did a little quiet business only in trotting-matches and quiet handicaps, to the great gamblers of the ring, who took noblemen's odds in thousands, and netted as much in lucky hits as those other great gamblers of the 'Change and the Bourse whom a world that frowns on the Heath smiles on so benignly when they are successful. All the vast genus, flashy, slangy, sharp as needles, with a language of their own, a literature of their own, a world of their own, whom marquises and earls are eagerly familiar with in the levelling atmosphere of the Lawn and the Downs, and give a distant frigid nod to, at the uttermost, if they pass them in Piccadilly, were there; and amidst them, in the terrific babel of raised voices, Trevenna pushed his way,—as he pushed it everywhere.

Sir Galahad was higher than ever in public favour. All the shrewdest men were afraid to touch him. The Clarencieux stables had been famous since the Regency. Trevenna bet but very little usually, he was known to have but little money to risk; but men were eager to have his opinion of the favourite. None had such opportunities of telling to a nicety the points, powers, stay, and

pace of the Clarencieux horse in its prime. He gave the opinion frankly enough. Sir Galahad was the finest horse of the year, and to his mind would all but walk over the course. The opinion went for a great deal, especially from one who was a master of stable-science, but who was no betting man himself. He had laid heavy bets in Chandos' name, backing the favourite for considerable sums so long as any could be found rash enough to take them.

There was one little, spare, red-wigged, foxy, quiet man who offered bets on a chestnut—Diadem, an outsider, unknown and unnoticed, generally looked on by the touts as fiddle-headed and weedy. The colt had trained in an obscure stable northward, and was a "colt" only to his breeders and owners in familiar parlance, having been known as a Plater in northern autumn-meetings, though having earned no sort of renown anywhere.

When Trevenna left Tattersall's, this little leg, a worn-out, shattered creature, who had ruined himself over one St. Leger and collapsed under it, was walking slowly out in the sun, having backed nothing except this ill-conditioned colt. Trevenna paused a second by him:

"Drop Diadem's name, or they'll be smelling a rat," he murmured. "Take the field against the favourite with any fools you like, as widely as you can."

"Wonderfully dark we have kept that chestnut. He's so ugly! that's the treasure of him; and we've trained him so close, and roped him so cleverly, that the sharpest tout that ever lay in a ditch all night to catch a morning gallop doesn't guess what that precious awkward-looking brute can do," thought Trevenna, as he got into his tilbury.

And he went to eat a second breakfast with Chandos.

CHAPTER IV.

THE QUEEN OF LILIES.

Lady Valencia St. Albans stood beside one of the palms in the conservatory of her sister Lady Chesterton's house. It was the day of the Drawing-Room; she waited for her sister, with her white train carelessly caught over one arm, and a shower of lace and silk falling to the ground and trailing there in a perfumy billowy cloud. She was a picture perfect as the eye could ask or the heart could conceive in the glowing colours of the blossoms round; and a painter would have given her to his canvas as the Ordella or the Evadne of Fletcher's dramas in all their sweet and delicate grace, or, if passion could pass over those luminous, thoughtful eyes, as Vittoria Corrombona in her royal and imperious beauty.

Passion had never troubled their stillness as yet. Some touch of calamity had indeed cast a shadow on her; the pressure of improvidence and of impoverishment had sent her father to the Roman air that she had breathed so long, and his decease had left her, for

an earl's daughter, almost penniless, while his title and estates had passed away to a distant heir male. Her poverty was bitter, terribly bitter, to the Queen of Lilies, daughter of the once splendid house of Ivors. She was little better than dependent on the generosity of her brother-in-law, Lord Chesterton, and the nature in her was born for the magnificence of dominion, the consciousness of inalienable power.

She stood now under the curled, hanging leaves of the palms, their pale Eastern green contrasting, as though she had been posed there by a painter's skill, with the exquisite colouring of her own beauty, and the snowy, trailing robes that fell about her. Of that beauty she was too proud to be vain; she was simply conscious of it as an empress is conscious of the extent of the sway of her sceptre.

"We're rather early," said her sister, a brusque, abrupt, showy woman. "Who sent you those flowers? Clydesmore? Admirable person, very admirable; great pity he's such a bore. How well you look, Valencia! *On ne pouvait mieux.* Chandos will be at the palace, you know, this morning."

"Are you sure?"

"Perfectly. He is everywhere. It is the most difficult thing to secure his presence at any time. He is so fastidious, too! He has sent me a most courtly note, however. I wrote to say you had just arrived from Rome, and that I would bring you with me to his ball to-night; and there is his answer. It is an immense deal from *him!*"

Lady Valencia took the white, scented paper her sister tossed to her, and a faint, gratified flush passed over the pure fairness of her face; her lips parted with a slight smile. She had heard so much of the writer—of his fame, of his conquests, of his homage to beauty, of his omnipotence in fashion.

"He is very rich, is he not?"

"Rich!" said Lady Chesterton. "A thousand men are rich; money's made so fast in these days. Chandos is very much more than only rich. He could make us all eat acorns and drink cider, if he chose to set the fashion of it. He rules the *ton* entirely, and lives far more *en roi* than some royalties we know."

"Yes; I heard that in Rome. Men spoke of being 'friends with Chandos,' as they might speak of being invited to the court."

"Chandos gives much greater fashion than the palace ever confers. Bores and parvenus go *there*, but they never visit *him*," responded Lady Chesterton, with an impressive accentuation almost thrilling. "Nothing will ever make him marry, you know. He would hold it in absolute horror. The Princess Marie of Albe is terribly in love with him—almost dying, they say; very beautiful creature, she is too, and would bring a magnificent dower."

The Lily Queen smiled slightly, her thoughtful, half-haughty smile. She knew, as though they were uttered aloud, the motives of her sister's little detour into this little sketch of sentiment.

"With so much distinction, he could be raised to the peerage any day, of course?" she inquired, half absently, drawing to her

the deep purple bells of an Oriental plant. She declined to pursue the more poetic track, yet she looked a poem herself.

"Raised!" echoed her sister. "My dear, he would call it anything but raised. The Chandos were Marquises of Clarencieux, you remember, until the title was attaindered in the Forty-Five. Philip Chandos, the premier, could have had it restored at any time, of course; but he invariably declined. Ernest Chandos is like his father; he would not accept a peerage."

"Not a new one. But he might revive his own."

"He might, of course; nothing would be refused to him; they would be glad to have him in the Lords. But he has often replied that, like his father, he declines it. He has some peculiar notions, you know; there has been some oath or other taken in the family, I believe, about it—great nonsense, of course—utter Quixotism. But men of genius *are* Quixotic: it never does to contradict them. They are like that mare of mine, Million: give them their head, and they will be sweet-tempered enough—take you over some very queer places sometimes, to be sure, but still tolerably even goers; but once give them a check, they rear and throw you directly. I never disagree with authors, any more than with maniacs."

With which expression of her compassionate consideration for genius, Lady Chesterton, who was very well known across the grass-countries and with the buckhounds, shook out her violet velvets and black Spanish laces, well content with the warning she had adroitly conveyed to her sister never to disagree with the eminent leader of society, whom women idolised as they idolised Jermyn and Grammont in the splendid days of Hampton Court.

The Queen of Lilies did not answer; she stood silent, looking still at the note she held, as though the paper could tell her of its writer, while her other hand ruthlessly drew the purple bells of the flower down in a shower at her feet.

"Is he so much spoilt, then? Can he not bear contradiction?" she said at length.

"My dear, he has never tried it," retorted her sister, with some petulance. "Bear it! of course he would bear it: he is the first gentleman in Europe: but the woman who teased him with it would never see him again. He is so used to being followed, he would not know what it was to be opposed. He is the most graceful, the most brilliant, the most generous person in the world: at the same time he is the most difficult to please. Guess, yourself, whether a man whose ideal is *Lucrèce* is very likely to be easily enslaved. But it is time to go."

And having cast that arrow to hit her sister's vanity or pique her pride, as it might happen, Lady Chesterton floated out of the drawing-rooms, followed by the Lily Queen, who laid the note down with a lingering farewell glance as she swept away. She had heard much of its writer some years past in Rome, although they had never met; and she had seen his eyes give her an eloquent mute homage the night before—eyes that it was said looked on no woman without awakening love.

"How beautiful his face is!" she thought, recalling the night just passed, and that momentary glance of one long famous to her by reputation. "Lord Clarencieux—Marquis of Clarencieux: —it is a fine title."

"Going to the Drawing-Room?" said Trevenna, entering one of the morning-rooms in Park Lane to take his meditated second breakfast. Chandos was taking his first, the chamber scented and shaded, and cooled with rose-water, and his attendants, Georgian and Circassian girls he had bought in the East and appointed to his household. The world had been a little scandalised at those lovely slaves; but Chandos had soon converted his friends to his own views regarding them. "Why have men to wait on you," he had argued, "when you can have women—soft of foot, soft of voice, and charming to look at? To take your chocolate from James or Adolphe is no gratification at all; to take it from Leila or Zelma is a great one." And his pretty Easterns were certainly irresistible living proofs of the force of his arguments. They were fluttering about him now with silver trays of coffee, sweetmeats, liqueurs, and fruit, dressed in their Oriental costume, and serving him with most loving obedience. A French duke and two or three Guardsmen were breakfasting with him, playing a lansquenet at noon, from which they had just risen. Men were very fond of coming to take a cup of chocolate from those charming young odalisques.

"Cards at noon, Chandos?" cried Trevenna, as he sauntered in the room, regardless alike of the presence of fashionable men who looked coldly on him, and of the charms of the Turkish attendants. "Fie! fie! The only legitimate gaming before dinner is the sanctioned and sanctified swindling done upon 'Change."

"Business is holier than pleasure, I suppose," laughed Chandos. "Business ruins a host of others; pleasure only ruins yourself: of course the world legitimates the first. How are you to-day? Yes, I am going to the Drawing-Room; I am going to see the Queen of Lilies. I will endure the crush and *ennui* of St. James's for her. Take something to eat, Trevenna?"

"All too light and too late for me. I'm a John Bull," said Trevenna, taking a glass of curaçoa, nevertheless, with some Strasbourg *pâté*. "Have you heard the last news of Lady Carallynne?"

"No. Gone off with poor Bodon?"

"Precisely. Went off with him from Lillingstone House last night. Never missed till just now. Carallynne's started in pursuit, swearing to shoot poor Bo dead. Dare say he will, too: 'bon sang ne peut mentir;' it must break the criminal law rather than break its word."

"Hard upon Bo," murmured Cosmo Grenvil of the Coldstreams. "She made such fast running on him, and a fellow can't always say no."

"Well, the mischief's her mother's fault; she made her marry a man she hated," said Chandos, drawing one of the bright braids

of the Circassian near him through his hand. "Poor Car! he is quite *à l'antique:* that sort of revenge has gone out with hair-powder, highwaymen, patches, and cock-fighting."

"Beauty of a commercial age: we can turn damaged honour and broken carriage-panels into money, nowadays," said Trevenna. "Carallynne's *rococo.* Liberty all, say I. If my wife runs away with a penniless hussar, why the deuce am I to make a fuss about it? I think *I* should be the gainer far and away."

"*Noblesse oblige,*" said Grenvil, softly. "Car don't like his name stained; Old-World prejudice; great bosh, of course, and Mr. Trevenna can't understand the weakness—very naturally."

"Mr. Trevenna doesn't understand it, Lord Cosmo. Why standing up to have an ounce of lead shot into you across a handkerchief should be considered to atone to you for another man's having the amusement of making love to your property, is beyond my practical comprehension. If I were a bellicose fellow, now, I should call *you* out for that pretty speech."

"I only go out with my equals," yawned the handsome Guardsman, indolently turning to resume his flirtation in Turkish with a Georgian.

"Where do you ever find them—for insolence?" said Trevenna, tranquilly.

"Clearly hit, Cos," laughed Chandos, to arrest whatever sharper words might have ensued. "So Lady Car has gone off at last! I declare, Trevenna, you are the most industrious *chiffonnier* for collecting naughty stories that ever existed. You must come across some very dirty tatters sometimes. I do believe you know everything half an hour before it happens."

"Scandals are like dandelion-seeds," said Trevenna, with the brevity of an Ecclesiasticus. "A breath scatters them to the four winds of heaven; but they are arrow-headed, and stick, where they fall, and bring forth and multiply fourfold."

"And scandals and dandelions are both only weeds that are relished by nothing but donkeys."

"You know nothing at all about either. You don't want scandal for your pastime, nor taraxacum for your liver; but when you are septuagenarian, dyspeptic, and bored, you'll be glad of the assistance of both."

"My dear fellow, what unimaginable horrors you suggest! Whenever I feel the days of darkness coming, I shall gently retire from existence in a warm bath, or breathe in chloroform from a bouquet of heliotrope. The world is a very pleasant club; but, if once it get dull, take your name off the books. Nothing easier; and your friends won't dine the worse."

"Rather the better, if your suicide is piquant. Something to censure, flavours your curry better than all the cayenne. We never enjoy our *entre-mets* so thoroughly as when we murmur over it, 'Very sad! terribly wrong!' Apropos of censure, even the *Hypercritic* won't censure *you:* there are three columns of superb laudation to *Lucrèce.*"

"Never read critiques, my dear Trevenna,—

'Such is our pride, our folly, or our *cru*,
That only those who cannot write, *review !*'

I am sorry to hear they praise me. I fear, after all, then, I must write very badly. Reviewers puff bad books, as ladies praise plain women."

"To show their own superiority: very likely. However, whether you please it or not, Jim Jocelyn is so lavish of his milk and honey that the *Hypercritic* will have to atone for his weakness by chopping up novels in vinegar all the rest of the season. I am sure he will expect to dine with you at Richmond."

"Indeed! Then he may continue to—expect it. I neither buy a Boswell with a *bouillabaisse*, nor play Mæcenas by giving a *matelote*. Praise hired with a *pâté!* what a droll state of literature!"

"Not at all. Everything's bought and sold, from the dust of the cinder-heaps to the favour of Heaven—which last little trifle is bid for with all sorts of things, from a piece of plate for the rector, to a new church for St. Paul, it being considered that the Creator of the Universe is peculiarly gratified by small pepper-pots in silver, and big pepper-pots in stucco, as propitiatory and dedicatory offerings. Pooh! everybody's bribed. The only blunder ever made is in the bribe not being suited to the recipient."

"You have suffered from that?"

Trevenna, the imperturbable, laughed as Grenvil dealt him that hit *à la Talleyrand*, murmuring the question in his silkiest, sleepiest tone. The Guardsman was a dead foe to the Adventurer.

"I wish I had, Lord Cosmo. I should like to be bribed right and left. It would show I was a 'man of position.' When the world slips *douceurs* into your pocket, things are going very well with you. I can't fancy a more conclusive proof of your success than a host of bribers trying to buy you. But, to be sure, the aristocratic prejudice is in favour of owing money, not of making it."

Which hit the ball back again to his adversary, Cos Grenvil being in debt for everything, from the thousands with which he had paid his Spring Meeting losses to the fifty-guinea dressing-box he had bought for a pretty *rosière* the day before, as he brought her over from Paris.

"Let that fellow alone, Cos," laughed Chandos, to avert the stormy element which seemed to threaten the serenity of his breakfast-party. "Trevenna will beat us all with his tongue, if we tempt him to try conclusions. He should be a Chancellor of the Exchequer or a cheap John; I am not quite clear which as yet."

"Identically the same things!" cried Trevenna. "The only difference is the scale they are on; one talks from the bench, and the other from the benches; one cheapens tins, and the other cheapens taxes; one has a salve for an incurable disease, and the other a salve for the national debt; one rounds his periods to put off a watch that won't go, and the other to cover a deficit that won't close; but they radically drive the same trade, and both are successful if the spavined mare trots out looking sound, and

the people pay up. 'Look what I save you,' cry Cheap John and Chancellor; and while they shout their economics, they pocket their shillings. Ah, if I were sure I could bamboozle a village, I should know I was qualified to make up a Budget."

"And my belief is you could do either or both," laughed Chandos, as he rose with a farewell caress of his hand to the bright braids of gazelle-eyed Leila. "Are you all going? To be sure! —the Drawing-Room, I had forgotten it: we shall be late as it is. *Au revoir*, then, till we meet in a crush. Nothing would take me to that hottest, dullest, drowsiest, frowsiest, and least courtly of courts if it were not for our lovely—what is her name?—Queen of the **Lilies.**"

And Chandos, who glittered at the Tuileries and at Vienna as magnificently as Villiers ever had done before him, and who had a court of his own to which no courts could give splendour, went to dress for St. James's as his guests left the chamber, pausing a moment himself beside Trevenna.

"Are you coming?"

"I? No! *Mr. John Trevenna* is not an elegant name for a court-list. It would look very *bourgeois* and bare beside the patrician stateliness of *Chandos of Clarencieux.*"

For a moment he spoke almost with a snarl, the genuine, bright serenity of his mirthful good temper failing for an instant. Surprised, Chandos laid his hand on his shoulder and looked at him.

"Nonsense! what is the matter with your name? It is a very good one, and I would bet much that you will one day make it a known one. Why should you not attend at the palace to-day? I presented you years ago."

"Yes, you did, *mon prince*," laughed Trevenna, whose ill-humour could not last longer than twenty seconds. "You took me out of prison, and you introduced me to court:—what an antithesis! No! I don't want to come. I always feel so dreadfully like a butler in silk stockings and tights; and I don't care about creeping in at the tail of a list in the morning papers. It's not elevating to your vanity to bring up the rear, like the spiders in a child's procession of Noah's Ark animals."

"Poor fellow! He has brains enough to be premier, and he is nothing but a penniless man-on-the-town," thought Chandos, as he entered the dressing-room and put himself in the hands of his body-servants to dress for the court. "A better temper never breathed, but it sometimes galls him, I dare say, not to occupy a higher place. I have been too selfish about him: giving him money and giving him dinners is not enough to deal fairly by him: he ought to be put forward. I will try and get him into the House. I could have a pocket-borough for him from some of them; and he could be trusted to make his own way there. His style would suit St. Stephen's; he would always be pungent, and never be metaphorical; he is too good a scholar to offend their taste, and too shrewd a tactician to alarm them with genius."

And revolving plans for the welfare and advancement of his *fidus Achates*, Chandos dressed and went down to his carriage.

Trevenna looked out of one of the windows, and watched the gay elegance of the equipage as it swept away.

"Go to the palace, my brilliant courtier," he said to himself, while his teeth set like the teeth of a bulldog, strong, fine, white teeth, that clenched close. "Men as graceful and as glittering even as you went by the dozens to Versailles in their lace and their diamonds, to end their days behind the bars of La Force or on the red throne of the guillotine. My dainty gentlemen, my gallant aristocrats, my gilded butterflies! 'Rira bien qui rira le dernier.' Do you think I amuse you all now not to *use* you all by-and-by? We're not at the end of the comedy yet. I am your Triboulet, your Chicot, whose wit must never tire and whose blood must never boil; but I may outwit you yet under the cap and bells. '*La vengeance est boiteuse; elle vient à pas lents; mais—elle vient!*' And what a comfort that is!"

This was the solitary weakness in his virile and energetic nature —a nature otherwise strong as bronze and unyielding as granite— this envy, intense to passion, morbid to womanishness, vivid to exaggeration of all these symbols, appanages, and privileges of rank. Chiefly, of course, he envied them for that of which they were the insignia and the producer; but, beyond this, he envied them themselves, envied every trifle of their distinction with as acute and as feminine a jealousy as ever rankled in a woman's heart for the baubles and the flatteries she cannot attain. It was a weakness, and one curiously and deeply graven into his temperament, in all other respects so bright, so shrewd, so practical, and so dauntless.

As he turned from the casement, the retriever, Beau Sire, standing near, fixed his brown eyes on him and growled a fierce, short growl of defiance. Trevenna looked at him and laughed.

"Curse you, dog! You needn't be jealous of me, Beau Sire: *I* don't love your master."

Nevertheless, Trevenna rang the bell, and ordered some of the best clarets of Beau Sire's master to be brought for his own drinking, and took his luncheon in solitude. He offered Beau Sire the dog's favourite *bonne bouche*, the liver-wing of a pheasant; but Beau Sire showed his teeth, and refused to touch it, with a superb canine scorn.

"You've more discrimination than your master, O you Lavater among retrievers! *You* know his foes: *he* doesn't," laughed Trevenna, while he finished his luncheon with the finer appreciation of Dubosc's talent, and of the oily perfections of the hock and the mareschino, because of his previous asceticism over a mutton-chop.

"You are safe for the Cup, Ernest?" said his Grace of Castlemaine, as they encountered each other in the press of the reception-room at the palace. The duke was a very old man, but he was as superb a gentleman as any in Europe, a gallant soldier, a splendid noble still, with his lion-like mane of silken silver hair and his blue and flashing eyes, as he stood now in his Field-Marshal's uniform, with the Garter ribbon crossing his chest, and star and

orders innumerable on his heart, above the scars of breast-wounds gained at Vittoria and in many a cavalry-charge in Spain.

"Safe? Oh, yes. There is nothing in any of the establishments to be looked at beside Galahad," answered Chandos, between whom and the duke there was always a sincere and cordial affection. They were alike in many things.

"No: at least it must be kept very dark if there be. By the way, there was a man—a thorough scamp, but a very good judge of a horse—offering very widely at Tattersall's to-day on a chestnut, Diadem. I know the fellow: he got into difficulties years ago, at the time of the White Duchess scandal: she was carted out stiff as a stake on the St. Leger morning, and it was always suspected he poisoned her; but he would know what he was about, and he offered long odds on the chestnut."

"Diadem?" repeated Chandos, whose eyes were glancing over the many-coloured sea about him of feathers, jewels, floating trains, military orders, and heavy epaulets, to seek out the Queen of the Lilies. "Diadem? You mean an outsider, entered by a Yorkshire man? My dear duke, he is the most wretched animal, I hear. Trevenna tells me he could not win in a Consolation scramble."

"Humph! may-be. You never scarcely go to the Corner yourself?"

"Very rarely. I like to keep up the honour of the Clarencieux establishment; but of all abominations the slang of the stable is the most tedious. Trevenna manages all that for me, you know."

"Yes, I know. Clever fellow, very clever; but I never liked him. Nothing but an adventurer."

"For shame, duke! *You* should not use that word. It is the last resource of mediocrity when it can find nothing worse to cast against excellence."

"Believe in people, my dear Chandos; believe in them! You will find it so profitable!" murmured his Grace, as the press of the crowd swept them asunder.

From the Guardsmen, who, to their own discomfiture, had formed the escort, and were drawn up with their troop outside to catch but fugitive glimpses of fair faces as the carriages passed, to the ministers in the Throne-room, whose thoughts were usually too prosaically bent on questions of supply or votes of want of confidence to turn much to these vanities, there was one predominant and heightened expectation—the sight of the Queen of the Lilies. Rumour had long floated from Rome of her extraordinary loveliness; poets had sung it, sculptors immortalised it, and artists adored it there. Chandos now waited for it impatiently where he stood among the circle of princes, peers, and statesmen about the throne. His loves had been countless, always successful, never embittered, intensely impassioned while they lasted, swiftly awakened, and often as rapidly inconstant. The very facility with which his vows were heard made them as easily broken: he loved passionately, but he loved so many! The eyes that he had last looked on were always the stars that guided him. A woman

would very likely have told him that he had never really loved: he would have told her that he had loved a thousand times. And he would have been more right than she. Love is no more eternal than the roses, but, like the roses, it renews with every summer sun in as fair a fragrance as it bloomed before.

Women only rebel against this truth because *their* season of the roses—their youth—is so short.

At last the delicate white robes swept by him; thrown out from the maze of gorgeous colour, of gleaming gold, of diamonds and sapphires, of purples fit for Titian, of rubies fit for Rubens, of azure, of scarlet, of amber, filling the chamber, like a cameo from the deep hues of an illuminated background, the Athenian-like fairness of her face glanced once more on his sight: she was close to him as she swept towards the throne.

"She is fit, herself, for the throne of the Cæsars," he thought, as he followed the slow soft movements of her imperial grace. Once again their eyes met, she saw him where he stood among the royal and titled groups about the dais, and a slight flush rose over her brow—a flush that, if it betrayed her, was hidden as she bowed her proud young head before her sovereign, yet not hidden so soon but that he caught it.

"Passionless! They must wrong her; they have not known how to stir her heart," he thought, as he followed her with his glance still as she passed onward and out of the Throne-room. Her remembrance haunted him in the palace: for the first time he thrust such a remembrance away. "Bagatelle!" he thought, as he threw himself back among his carriage-cushions and drove to Flora de l'Orme's. "Let me keep to beauty that I can win at no cost but a set of emeralds or a toy-villa: the payment for *hers* would be far too dear. Heloïse was right."

"Brilliant affair! More like a *fête à la Régence* than anything else. How the money goes! The cost of one of those nights would buy *me* a seat in the House," thought Trevenna that evening, as he passed up the staircase of Park Lane.

The dinners and suppers of the Richmond villa, in all their gaiety and extravagance, were not more famous with Anonyma and her sisterhood, than the entertainments to the aristocratic worlds with which Chandos, in Paris and Naples, revived all the splendour of both Regencies, and outshone in his own houses the gatherings of imperial courts, were celebrated in that *crême de la crême* which alone were summoned to them. The *fêtes* that he gave abroad he gave in England, startling society with their novelty and their magnificence. Chandos showed that the Art of Pleasure was not dead. To-night all that was highest in both the French and English aristocracies came to a costume-ball that was also at pleasure a masked-ball, and professedly in imitation of the Veglione of Florentine carnivals.

Trevenna paused a moment near the entrance of the reception-rooms, where he could see both the constantly increasing throng that ascended the stairs and the long perspective of the chambers

beyond, that ended in the dark palm-groups, the masses of tropic flowers, and the columns and sheets of glancing water foaming in the light of the winter-garden in the distance. Masked himself, and dressed simply in a dark violet domino, he looked down through the pageant of colour, fused into one rich glow by the lustre that streamed from a hundred chandeliers, from a thousand points of illumination, till his eyes found and rested on Chandos, who, with the famed Clarencieux diamonds glittering at every point of his costume, as Edward the Fourth, stood far off in an inner drawing-room, receiving his guests as they arrived.

"Ah, my White Rose!" said Trevenna to himself, "how the women love you, and how the world loves you, and how lightly you wear your crown! Edward himself had not brighter gold in his hair, nor fairer loves to his fancy. Well, you have some Plantagenet blood, they say, in that *sangre azul* of your gentleman's veins, and the Plantagenets were always dazzling and—doomed."

With which historical reminiscence drifting through his thoughts, Trevenna drew himself a little back, farther into the shelter of an alcove filled with broad-leaved Mexican plants, and studied the scene at his leisure. There was a certain savage envy and a certain luscious satisfaction mingled together in the contemplation.

"The fools that go to see comedies, and read novels and satires, while they can look on at Life!" thought Trevenna, who was never weary of watching that mingling of comedy and melodrama, though his genius was rather the loquacious than the meditative. "I can't picture greater fun than to have been a weather-wise philosopher who knew what Vesuvius was going to do, told nobody anything, but took a stroll through Pompeii on the last day, while his skiff waited for him in the bay. Fancy seeing the misers clutch their gold, while he knew they'd offer it all for bare life in an hour; the lovers swear to love for eternity, while he knew their lips would be cold before night; the bakers put the loaves in the oven, while he knew nobody would ever take them out; the epicures order their prandium, while he knew their mouths would be chokefull of ashes; the throngs pour into the circus, laughing and eager, while he knew they poured into their grave; the city gay in the sunshine, while he knew that the lava-flood would swamp it all before sunset. *That* would have been a comedy worth seeing. Well, I can fancy it a little. My graceful Pompeian, who know nothing but the rose-wreaths of Aglaë and Astarte, how will you like the stones and the dust in your teeth?"

And Trevenna, pausing a moment to enjoy to its fullest the classical tableau he had called up in his mind's eye, and looking still at the friend whom he had alternately apostrophised as Plantagenet and Pompeian, left his alcove and his reverie to mingle with the titled crowd in his dark domino and his close Venetian mask, casting an epigram here, a scandal there, a suspicion in this place, a slander in that, blowing away a reputation as lightly as thistle-down, and sowing a seed of disunion between two lives that loved, with dexterous whispers under his disguise that could never be traced, and as amused a malice in the employment as any Siamese

monkey when he swings himself by his tail from bough to bough to provoke the crocodiles to exasperation. True, as monkey may get eaten for his fun, so Trevenna might get found out for his pastime; but, to both monkey and man, the minimum of danger with the maximum of mischief made a temptation that was irresistible. Trevenna had been the most mischievous boy that ever tormented tom-cats; he was now the most mischievous wit that ever tormented mankind.

He was a moral man; he had no vices; he had only one weakness—he hated humanity.

"How extravagant you are, Ernest!" said the Duke of Castlemaine. "Do you think these people love you any the better for all you throw away on them, eh?"

"Love me? Well, the fairer section do, I hope."

The Duke gave another little growl to himself as he brushed a moth off his broad blue ribbon.

"Ah! women were always the ruin of your race and of mine: you have the weakness from both sides, Ernest. There was your father——"

"Who was a deucedly proud man, wasn't he, duke?" asked Trevenna, with scant ceremony, as he came up by Castlemaine's side, without his mask now, and having glided into a blue domino, that his gunpowder-whispers might not be traced to him.

The Duke looked down on him from the tower of his height, scarce bent more than when he was a Colonel of cavalry at Salamanca.

"Proud? Perhaps so, sir. Adventurers thought him so. He put down impudence wherever he met with it. It is a pity he is not alive now."

"To put *me* down? I understand, duke," laughed Trevenna, impervious to satire, and impenetrable even to a cut direct, who caught every bullet sent against him, gaily and courageously, and played with it unharmed as a conjurer will. (What magic has the conjurer? None; but he has one trick more than the world that he baffles.) "Ah! I can't let myself be put down; I'm like a cork or an outrigger; all my safety lies in my buoyancy. I have no ballast; I must float as I can. Storms sink ships of the line, and spare straws."

"Yes, sir, rubbish floats generally, I believe," said his Grace, grimly, turning his back on him as he took out his snuff-box, enamelled by Pettitot and given him by Charles Dix. Trevenna bowed as low as though the silver-haired Sabreur had paid him a compliment and had *not* turned his back on him.

"I accept your Grace's prophecy. Rubbish floats; *I* shall float. And when I am at the top of the wave, won't every one call my dirtiest pebbles fine pearls?"

"I think he will float," murmured the Duke, passing outward through the rooms to the noiseless, shut-off, luxurious chamber dedicated to cards, which had an altar in Chandos' house, as if they were its Penates. "Sort of man to do well anywhere; be a privileged wit in a palace, and chief demagogue in a revolution;

be merry in a bagne, and give a pat answer if he were tried for his life; hold his own in a cabinet, and thrive in the bush. A clever fellow, an audacious fellow, a most marvellous, impudent fellow."

"An insufferable fellow! I wish Chandos would not give him the run of the house, and the run of the town, as he does," said my Lord of Morehampton, wending his way also to the card-rooms. "The man has no idea of his place."

"I think he has only too good a one: he imagines it to be—everywhere. But the fellow will do well. He plays so admirable a game at whist; leads trumps in the bold French manner, which has a great deal to be said for it; has an astonishing recuperative power; if one play will not serve, changes his attack and defence with amazing address, and does more with a wretched hand than half the players in the clubs do with a good one. A man who can play whist like that could command a kingdom; he has learnt to be ready for every position and for every emergency. Still, with you, I don't like him," said his Grace, entering the card-room to devote himself to his favourite science at guinea points, where, despite his inherent aversion to Trevenna, he would have been willing to have that inimitable master of the rubber for a partner.

The Duke was quite right, that a man who has trained his intellect to perfection in whist has trained it to be capable of achieving anything that the world could offer. A campaign does not need more combination; a cabinet does not require more address; an astronomer-royal does not solve finer problems; a continental diplomatist does not prove greater tact. Trevenna had laid out the time he spent over its green table even more profitably for the ripening and refining of his intelligence than in the hours he gave to his blue-books; and the Duke's eulogy was but just.

His rooms were nearly full, but Chandos still glanced every now and then impatiently towards the entrance-doors that opened in the distance to the staircase. Eyes that might well claim to be load-stars wooed him through coquettish Venetian masks, and faces too fair for that envious disguise met his gaze wherever it turned. On his ear at that moment was the silvery ring of La Vivarol's gay raillery, and at his side was that bright exile of the Tuileries, fluttering her sapphire-studded wings as a *Fille des Feux*. Still ever and again his eyes turned towards the entrance as he moved among his guests, and suddenly a new look glanced into them. She who held him captive at that moment saw that look, and knew it well. She had seen it lighten for her in the forests of Compiègne when the summer moon had streamed down through the leaves on a royal hunting-party sweeping through the glades to the mellow music of hunting-horns, and they had lingered behind while the bridles dropped on their horses' necks, and only the wooing of soft words broke the silence as the hoofs sank noiselessly in the deep thyme-tangled grasses.

She knew the look of old, and followed it. It rested on the Queen of Lilies.

If that poetic loveliness had been fair in the morning light, it

was far fairer now. By a delicate flattery to her host the Lily Queen had chosen as her impersonation the *rôle* of his own Lucrèce, a Byzantine Greek; and her dress, half Eastern, glowed with the brightness of Oriental hues, while the snow-white barracan floated round her like a cloud, and Byzantine jewels gleamed upon her bosom and her hair—jewels that had seen the Court of the Commeni and the sack of Dandolo—jewels that had once, perhaps, been on the proud, false brow of the Imperial Irene.

La Vivarol looked, and did not underrate one in whom she foresaw her rival.

"Ah, there is your living Lucrèce! It must be charming to sketch characters and find them come to life."

Chandos lost the ironic and malicious contempt with which jealousy subtilely tipped the tone of the words, as, leaving the Countess to the homage of the maskers about her, he did for the Queen of Lilies what he had not done for any other—passed out of the inner drawing-room, where he received his guests, and advanced to meet the impersonation of his Lucrèce.

That moment was fatal to him—that moment in which she came on his sight as startling as though magic had summoned the living shape of his own fancies and breathed the breath of existence into the thoughts of his poem. He could never now see her as she was; he would see in her his own ideal, not asking whether she only resembled it as the jeweller's lily with petals of pearl and leaves of emerald, which gleams equally bright in every hand, resembles the forest-lily with its perfume and purity, growing fair and free under the sunshine of heaven, which dies under one ungentle and alien touch.

The lilies may be alike, leaf for leaf, beauty for beauty, but the fragrance is breathed but from one.

"Necromancers of old summoned the dead; you have done more, Lady Valencia, you have caught and incarnated an idler's dream. How can he ever thank you?" he said, later on, as he led her into the winter-garden, where the light was subdued after the glitter of the *salons*, and the hum of the ball with the strains of the music were only half heard, and through the arching aisles of palm and exotics his Circassian attendants noiselessly flitted like so many bright-hued birds.

She smiled, while a new lustre came into the thoughtful splendour of her eyes. Her heart was moved—or her pride.

"I must rather thank you that you do not rebuke me for being too rash. I assure you that I feared my own temerity."

"What fear could you have, save out of pity for others? My fairest fancies of Lucrèce are embodied now—perhaps only too well. What made you divine so entirely the woman I dreamt of? She only floated dimly even through my thoughts, until I saw her to-night."

"Hush! That is the language of compliment. I have heard how delicately and how dangerously you will flatter."

"Indeed, no: you have heard wrongly. I never flatter. But there are some—you are one of them—to whom the simplest

words of truth must needs sound the words of an exaggerated homage."

All love in Chandos had been quickly roused, rather from the senses and the fancy than the heart, and roused for those to whom there was a royal road, pursued at no heavier penalty than some slight entanglement. That this royal road could not avail with the Queen of Lilies chilled her charm, yet heightened it, as it lay like a light but unyielding rein, checking the admiration she roused in him, yet not checking it so much but that she enchained his attention while she remained in his rooms, while the bright eyes of his neglected *Fille des Feux*, kept dangerous account of the *lèse-majesté*.

La Vivarol fluttered her golden wings, and waltzed as though they really bore her, bird-like, through the air, and flirted with her most glittering coquetries; but she noted every glance that was given to another, and treasured the trifles of each slight infidelity.

If a Viardort, a court-coquette, a woman of the world, an aristocrat, could be guilty of so much weakness, she had loved Chandos—loved the brilliance of the eyes that looked into hers under the purple vine-shadows—loved the melody of the voice that had lingered on her ear in the orange-alleys of Fontainebleau —loved him if only because so many loved him in vain. And far more than her heart was involved in his allegiance; a thing far dearer to her, far closer and more precious to all women—her vanity.

If any one had talked to the pretty, worldly, pampered, and little-scrupulous Countess of fidelity, she would have satirised him mercilessly for such provinciality, and would have asked him where he had lived that he thought the vows of the soft religion eternal. She was infidelity itself, and held to the right divine of caprice; talk of "for ever," and she would yawn with *ennui;* appeal to her reason, and she would cordially assent to the truth that "nous sommes bien aises que l'on devienne infidèle pour nous dégager de notre fidélité." But, alas for the consistency of fair philosophers! Madame applied her theories to all lovers except her own, and, while she was eloquent on the ridicule and the weariness of constancy, held inconstancy to herself as the darkest of treason.

La Vivarol, whose breviary was Rochefoucauld, and whose precursor was Montespan, philosophised inimitably on the rights of inconstancy, but was none the less prepared to avenge and to resent with all the force of a Corsican vendetta any homage that should dare wander from her.

And to-night she was openly, visibly, unmistakably *neglected*. The gleam of those antique Byzantine jewels was the light that he followed. In this new loveliness, so rich in its colouring, so proud in its cast, yet delicate as the fairest thought of a sculptor when rendered into the purity of the marble, he saw the portraiture of an ideal, half idly, half passionately cast into words in the work he called *Lucrèce*, that had been chiefly written in hot, dreamy days in the syringa and basilica-scented air of his summer palace

on the Bosphorus, and had caught in it all the voluptuous colour, all the mystical enchantment, all the *splendida vitia* of glow and of fancy, that still belong to the mere name of the East. She was no longer the beauty of the season to him; she was the incarnation of his own most golden and most treasured fancies. Side by side in his temperament with the nature of the voluptuary was the heart of the poet. She appealed to, and tempted, both. Since the days of his first loves, felt and whispered under Oriental stars to antelope-eyed Georgians, none had had so vivid a charm as this soft yet imperial beauty, who came to him in the guise of his heroine. And he let the world see it.

"If Madame live twenty years, Chandos, she will never forgive you to-night," whispered Trevenna, in passing, as his host ascended the staircase, having escorted the Lady Valencia to her carriage, while a crowd of glittering costumés and maskers followed her footsteps,—a ceremonial he never showed except to those of blood royal.

"Forgive me! What have I done?"

"What! O most innocent Lovelace, what serene sublimity of ignorance! You have piqued a jealous woman, *très-cher;* and he who does that might as well have sat down upon a barrel of gunpowder: it is much the less fatal combustible of the two."

"Nonsense! We are none of us jealous now: everybody is too languid and too well bred."

Chandos laughed, and passed on into the throng of his courtly maskers to seek the golden wings and falcon eyes of his liege lady, and make his peace with her, as far as it could be made without offending her more deeply by showing her a suspicion that the peace had ever been broken.

Trevenna looked after him, watching the flash of the jewels on his dress, and the careless grace of his movements as he passed through the groups of his drawing-rooms; and Trevenna's eyes wandered downward through the blaze of light, and the wilderness of clustered flowers, along the whole line of the marble stairs with their broad scarlet carpeting into the depths of the hall, where at the farthest end, with the lustre from two giant candelabra full upon it, was the statue of the great minister, Philip Chandos.

His glance wandered from the living man, with the living flash of the rose-diamonds about him like so many points of sunlight, to rest upon the cold, haughty serenity of power that was spoken in the attitude of the marble limbs and the traits of the marble features in that likeness of the dead.

And he smiled a little.

"*Beaux seigneurs,*" he said, softly and low to himself, "there may be games at which you will not win. Ah, my great Chandos, how you stand there in your marble pride as if you could lord it over us all still! and a stone-mason's hammer could knock you to pieces now! *Sic transit gloria mundi.* Your darling Ernest is a brilliant man; you have your wish; but we may sing the old see-saw over him too, before very long. And what will the world care for him then?"

With which inquiry, mutely addressed in self-communion to the statue where it stood in the flood of light and maze of exotics in the great hall below, Trevenna went down-stairs and out to his night-cab as the spring morning broke in its earliest hours.

He looked back as he waited a second in the portico for the cab to make its way up to him. The music came on his ear from the distant ball-room, and as he glanced backward at the hall and staircase, with its bronzes, marbles, malachites, jasper, gold and silver candelabra, and clusters of blossom and of broad-leaved Southern shrubs, while the scarlet of the laced liveries gleamed through the boughs and made it like one of the palace-antechamber scenes of Paul Veronese's canvas, the statue rose white, calm, regal in its attitude of command, haughty as had been the life of which it was the mute and breathless symbol.

"Curse you!" he muttered in his teeth, while the laugh passed off his face and the mirth out of his eyes. "Curse you living, and curse you dead! I will be paid, like Shylock, with a pound of flesh cut from the heart,—from the heart of your brilliant darling. And your power cannot play the part of Portia and stop *me;* for you are dead, *mon ministre!*"

And with that valediction to the dwelling across whose threshold he was ever welcomed and to whose board he was ever bidden, Trevenna passed down the steps and drove away in the grey of the morning.

CHAPTER V.

"THE MANY YEARS OF PAIN THAT TAUGHT ME ART."

When his guests had left, and all the costumes that had glittered through his *salons* had dispersed, some half-dozen men, his most especial friends, remained, and in a *cabinet de peinture*, hung chiefly with French pictures of the eighteenth century, while the Circassians brought them wines and liqueurs, sat down to *Trente et Quarante*, half of them taking the bank and half the table. It was a customary termination of Chandos' parties, and was at least an admirable stimulant for sweeping away too lingering memories of beauty that might have appeared there.

The Chandos of Clarencieux had always been famed for their love of play, from the days that they shook the dice with Charles the Second, or threw a main before supper at Choisy with Louis and Richelieu and Soubise. But his love of cards, however great it might be, had not cost their present representative so much as another trait in his nature, *i.e.* that he loved men and trusted them with an absolute and undoubting faith.

The *Trente et Quarante* in the little picture-cabinet was too beguiling to be quickly left; the gold changed hands like lightning, not going less quickly for the iced hock and the claret and seltzer that washed it down, and the gay passages with the pretty Easterns that interrupted it. It was past six in the morning when the Duc

Orvâle broke up the bank and gave the signal for departure, he with Chandos having been the chief losers. The latter cared only for the gay excitement of hazard; when the game was over, whether it had been favourable to him or not, he cared not one straw. Generous to great excess, he never heeded the loss of money, as, it is true, he had never learned the value of it.

As he went through the corridors to his own chamber, after his guests had at last left him, to take a few hours' sleep in the opening day, the deep, rich, melancholy roll of organ-notes, hushed by closed doors, but pealing the *Tantum Ergo*, caught his ear in the silence. Music had been a passion with him from his infancy; wealth had enabled him to indulge the passion to the full, and its strains drew him towards it now.

"Lulli is beginning a new day while we are going to bed," he thought, as he turned down a short passage and opened the door that shut in the melody. The daylight in the chamber looked strangely white and pure and subdued after the glare of the myriad gas and wax lights; and his form, with the rich silks, laces, and velvets of the Edward-the-Fourth dress, and the sparkle of the Clarencieux diamonds, looked as strange upon the threshold of this quiet and antique room,—a room almost like an oratory in the midst of the luxurious palatial Park Lane house, with its splendour, its crowds, its dissipations, and its unending gaieties. The apartment was long, lighted by two windows, through which the just-arisen sun poured in, and the antique shape of the walnut-wood furniture, the ebony music and reading-desks, and the carved ivory Christ above a table in a recess, gave it the look of a religious retreat, especially as at the farther end stood an organ, with its gilded tubes glistening against the dark walnut of its case, while from its chords there swelled the harmony of the great Sacramental Hymn.

The musician was a man of five or six-and-twenty, whose head had the spiritual beauty of Shelley's; the features fair and delicate to attenuation; the eyes large, dark, and lustrous; the mouth very perfect, both in form and expression; the whole face of singular patience and singular exaltation. His lower limbs were all-but useless, they were slightly paralysed and much crippled, and his shoulders were bowed with a marked but in no way repulsive deformity. Music grand as Beethoven ever dreamed or Pasta ever sang woke from his genius into life. But in the ways of the world Guido Lulli was unlearned as a child; for the labours of earth he was as helpless as any bird whose wings are broken. Men would have called him a half-witted fool; in the days of Alcuin or of Hildebrand he would have been held a saint; simply, he was but a cripple and an enthusiast, whom nature had cruelly maltreated, but whom genius had divinely recompensed.

At the opening of the door he turned, and a radiation of pleasure broke like sunlight over his face, while into his eyes came the glorious look of love and of fidelity that beams for us in the clear brown noble eyes of a dog.

He strove to rise,—to him a matter of so slow and painful an

effort. Before he could do so, Chandos crossed the room lightly and swiftly, and laid his hands on the musician's shoulders with a kind and almost caressing gesture.

"Ah, Lulli! you are awake and employed before I have yet been in bed. You shame me here with your flood of sunlight. No! do not rise; do not leave off; go on with the *Tantum Ergo* while I listen. It is a grand hymn to the day."

Lulli looked at him still with that loving, reverent, grateful look of a dog's deathless fidelity.

"Monseigneur, the sound of your voice to me is like the sound of water to the thirsty in a desert place," he said, simply, in sweet, soft, Southern French, giving, in earnest veneration to his host and master, the title that Trevenna often gave in jest.

Chandos smiled on him,—a sunlit, generous smile, gentle as a woman's.

"And so is your music to me: so there is no debt on either side. Go on."

"My life is one long debt to you God will pay it to you: I never can."

The words were heartfelt, and his eyes, looking upward, still uttered them with still more eloquence. Contrast more forcible than these, as they were now together, could scarcely have been found in the width of the world. The attenuated and enfeebled cripple, with his useless limbs, his bowed shoulders, and his life worn with physical suffering that bound him like a captive and robbed him of all the power and the joy of existence, beside the splendid grace of the man who stood above him, in a strength too perfect for dissipation to leave the slightest trace of weariness upon it, and with a beauty dazzling as a woman's, fresh from every pleasure of the sight or sense, and full of all the proudest ambitions, the richest enjoyments, and the most careless *insouciance* of a superb manhood and a cloudless fortune. A contrast more startling or, for one, more bitter could not have been placed side by side. But there was no envy *here*. The loyal gratitude of Lulli had no jealous taint upon it that could have made him, even for one moment, see anything save gladness and gentleness in the gracious presence of the man to whom he owed more than existence. He could no more have felt envy to his benefactor than he could have taken up a knife and stabbed him.

Six years before, travelling through southern Spain, an accident to his carriage had detained Chandos at a wayside inn in the very heart of the Vega. Whiling away the tedium of such detention by sketching an old Moorish bridge that spanned a torrent, high in air, he heard some music that fixed his attention,—the music of a violin played with an exquisite pathos. He inquired for the musician. A handsome gitana, with a basket of melons on her head, gladly answered his inquiries. The violinist was a youth dying, as she thought, in a *châlet* near. He was alone, very poor, and a stranger. The words were sufficient to arrest Chandos: he sought out the *châlet* and found the musician, lying on a straw pallet, and dying, as the girl had said, rather from hunger than any other

illness, but with his large burning eyes fixed on the sun that was setting beyond the screen of tangled vine-leaves that hung over the hut door, and his hands still drawing from the chords, in wild and mournful strains, the music for which life alone lingered in him. He was a mere lad of twenty years, and was a cripple. Chandos only saw to rescue him. Food, hope, and the sound of a voice that spoke gently and pityingly to him, fused fresh existence into the dying boy: he lived, and his life from that moment was sheltered by the man who had found him perishing on the Spanish hills.

Guido Lulli had lived in Chandos' household, never treated as a dependant, but surrounded by all that could alleviate or make him forget his calamity, out of the world by his own choice as utterly as though he were in a monastery, spending his days and nights over his organ and his music-score, and never having harder task than to organise the music of those concerts and operas in the private theatre at Clarencieux for which his patron's entertainments were noted.

Guido Lulli's was far from the only life that the pleasure-seeker and the voluptuary had redeemed, defended, and saved.

Obedient to his wish, the melody of the Catholic chant rolled through the stillness of the early morning, succeeding strangely to the wit, the laughter, the revelry, and the hazard of a few moments previous. It was precisely such a succession of contrasts of which his life was made up, and which gave it its vivid and unfading colour: closely interwoven, and ever trenching one upon another, the meditative charm of art and of thought succeeded with him to the pleasures of the world. He would pass from all the intoxication and indulgence of an Alcibiades to all the thoughtful solitude of an Augustine; and it was this change, so complete and so perpetually variable, which, while it was produced by the mutability of his temperament, made in a large degree the utter absence in his life of all knowledge of satiety, all touch of weariness.

He listened now, leaning his arm on the sill of the open window that looked out upon the gardens below, fresh, even in town, with the breath of the spring on their limes and acacias, and the waking song of the nest-birds greeting the day. The rolling notes of the organ pealed out in all their solemnity, the cathedral rhythm swelling out upon the silence of the dawn, that had been heard by him so often in the splendour of St. Peter's at Easter-time, in the hush of Notre Dame at midnight mass, and in the stillness of Benedictine and Cistercian chapels in the chestnut-woods of Tuscany and the lonely mountain-sides of hill-locked Austrian lakes. A thousand memories of foreign air were in the deep-drawn and melodious chords; a thousand echoes of the dead glories of mediæval Rome rose with the

> "Tantum ergo Sacramentum
> Veneremur cernui."

A helpless and fragile cripple in the world, no stronger than a reed, and ignorant of all things save his art, once before his organ.

once in the moment of his inspiration, Guido Lulli had the grandeur of a master, the force and the omnipotence of a king. In his realm he reigned supreme, and Chandos not seldom left his titled associates and his careless pleasures to come and listen to these melodies in his *protégé's* still, monastical chamber, as he heard them now.

He leaned against the embrasure, looking out on to the mass of leaves beneath, and letting his thoughts float dreamily down the stream of sound, blent with the lustre of the smiling eyes and the gleam of the imperial beauty that had newly caught his memory and his fancy. Entangled with the imaginations of his own Byzantine poem, she haunted him with that early careless whisper, soft, idle, and painless, of love in its first moments,—love that is but a mere momentary, passionate impulse, and may never ripen to more.

The lull of early morning, the measure of the music passing onward without pause into the masses of Mozart and Mendelssohn, fell gently and mellowly on him after the crowded hours of the past night and day. As the chords thrilled through the silence of the breaking day, joining the clear notes of the awakening birds beneath amidst the leaves, his thoughts wandered away, dreamy and disconnected, ranging over the cloudless years of a successful life, in which all the memories were painted as with an Elizabethan pencil, without shadow. In them he had never known one grey touch of disappointment, far less still one dark taint of calamity; in them woman's lips had never betrayed him, nor man's hand been raised against him. Fortune had favoured and the world had loved him. No regret lay on him, and no unfulfilled desire left its trail. There was nothing in his career he wished undone; there were no memories in it that it would have been pain to open; there were no pages of it that were not bright with soft, rich, living colour. He had passed through life having escaped singularly all the shadows that lie on it for most men; and he had, far more than most, what may be termed the faculty for happiness, a gift, in any temperament, whose wisdom and whose beauty the world too little recognises.

His thoughts, floating on with the melodious chords that swelled in wave on wave of sound through the quiet of the morning, drifted back by some unfollowed chain of association to the remembrance of the hot autumn sunset at Clarencieux, when, as a child, he had dreamt his chivalric fancies over the story of Arthur, and had told his father what his future should be.

"Have I kept my word?" he mused, as he leaned his arms on the embrasure of the window, while the early light fell on the gold and the jewels of his Plantagenet masquerade-dress.

The lofty, ideal, impossible dreams, so glorious in their impracticability, so fair in their sublime folly, in which boyhood had aspired to a soilless fame and an heroic sovereignty such as this earth has never seen and never can see, recurred to him with something that was almost, for the moment, a passing sadness,—the same sadness which, in the words of Jean Paul, lies in music,

"because it speaks to us of things that in all our life we find not, and never shall find."

"Have I kept my word?" he thought. "I rule the world of pleasure; but I meant *then* a wider world than that. They follow me because I lead the fashion; because I amuse them better than any other; because they gain some distinction by cutting their coats and wearing their wrist-bands like mine; but that is not the fame either he or I meant in those years. They talk of me; they imitate me; they obey me; they quote me; they adore my works, and they court my approbation. But am I very much more, after all, than a mere idler?"

The genius latent in him, which in his present life only found careless expression in glittering bagatelles and poems, half Lucretian, half Catullan, stirred in him now with that restlessness for higher goals, than refusal to be satisfied with actual and present achievement, which characterise genius in all its forms,—that unceasing and irrepressible "striving towards the light" which pursued Goethe throughout life, and was upon his lips in death. Dissatisfation in no shape ever touched Chandos; his years were too cloudless, and too full of fairest flavour, for discontent ever to be known in them. It was but rarely, now and then, when, in the pauses of his pleasures and his fame, the remembrance of his childhood's grand, visionary, impalpable ambitions came back to him, that the thought swept across him of having insufficiently realised them, of having been in some sort untrue to them, of losing in a dazzling celebrity the loftier purity of those early and impossible dreams.

It was not wholly true, nor wholly just towards himself. Egotism had little place in his life: full though it was of a Greek-like softness and Greek-like idolatry of beauty and of pleasure, of an Epicureanism that shunned all pain and abhorred all roughness and all harshness, the calamities of others were widely succoured by him, and the bead-roll was long of those who owed him the most generous gifts that man can owe to man.

He enjoyed, but he never forgot that others suffered. He loved the ease, the beauty, and the serenity of existence; but he also did his uttermost that others should know them too.

"I *enjoy*," he thought now, as he leaned out into the morning sunshine. "It is the supreme wisdom of life, and the best gift of the gods is to know it! The Greeks were right, and in this age men remember it too little. Old Guy Patin was a million times wiser than all the Frondeurs, sitting under the summer-shade of his Cormeille cherry-tree with Lucretius and Lucilius and Antoninus, while his friends killed each other with fret and fume. Bonaparte said, 'I have conquered Cairo, Milan, and Paris in less than two years, and yet if I died to-morrow I should only get half a page in any biographical dictionary;' but to get a line, or even only to get an obituary notice and oblivion, men toil a life away and consume their years in thankless, grinding, ceaseless labour. The benighted opticism of vanity! 'The succession of the nations is but as a torch-race.' What is it to feed the flame of one of the

torches for a passing second,—a spark that flares and dies? The Greek ideal of Dionysus, with the ivy on his brow and the thyrsus in his hand, bringing joy wherever he moved, while the wine flowed and nature bloomed wherever the god's foot fell, is the ideal of the real happy life, the life that knows how to enjoy."

The thoughts drifted through his mind lightly, dreamily, as the swell of the organ-notes poured on. It was true he enjoyed, and his temper, like the temper of the Greeks, asked only this of life.

Chandos was not only famous, not only gifted, not only steeped to the lips in delicate and sensuous delight; he was much more than all these: he was happy.

How many lives can say that?

The music paused suddenly, dropping down in its gorgeous festival of sound as a lark suddenly drops to the grass in the midst of its flood of song. Chandos turned as it ceased, and broke his idle thread of musing reverie, while he laid his hand gently on the musician's shoulder.

"Dear Lulli, while one hears your music, one is in Avillion. You make me dream of the old serene and sacred Πείρατα γαίης. Tell me, have you everything you wish? Is there nothing that can bring you more pleasure?"

Guido Lulli shook his head.

"I should be little worthy all I owe to you, if I could find one want unsatisfied."

"Owe! You owe me nothing. Who would give me such music as you can give? It is not everyone who is fortunate enough to have a Mozart in his house. I wish I could serve you better in the search that is nearest your heart. We have done all we could, Guido."

His voice was very gentle, and had a certain hesitation. He approached a subject that had a bitterness both of grief and of shame to his listener; and Chandos, carelessly disdainful of a prince's wishes, was careful of the slightest jar that could wound the sensitiveness of the man who was dependent on him.

Lulli's head sank, and a dark shadow passed over his face,—a flush of shame and of anger, as heavy and as passionate as could arise in a temperament so visionary and tender to feminine softness, mingled, too, with a sorrow far deeper than wrath can reach.

"It is enough," he said, simply, his words hushed, low, and bitter in his throat. "We are certain of her shame."

"Not certain," said Chandos, compassionately, while his hand still lay lightly on the musician's shoulder. "Where there is doubt there is always hope; and judgment should never be passed till everything is known. Do not be harsh to her, even in thought."

"Harsh? Am I harsh?"

"Not in your heart ever, I know."

"Not to her, not to her,—no!" murmured the Provençal, while his face was still sunk on his hands; "but to *him*. Not even to

know his name; not even to know where he harbours; not to tell where she is, that when she is deserted and wretched she might be saved from lower depths still!"

A terrible pain shook and stifled his voice, and Chandos was silent. The musician's sorrow was one to which no consolation could be offered and no hope suggested.

"I have had all done to trace her that is possible," he said, at last; "but two years have passed, and there seems no chance of ever succeeding; all clue appears lost. Do you think that she may have gone by another name at the time that her lover, whoever he may be, first saw her?"

"It is possible, monseigneur; I cannot tell," said Lulli, slowly, with a pathos of weariness more touching than all complaint and lament. "Be it as it will, she is dead to me; but—but—if we could know *him*, helpless cripple as I am, I would find strength enough to avenge my wrong and hers."

He raised himself as he said it, his slight, bent form quivering and instinct with sudden force, his pale and hollow cheek flushed, his eyes kindling. It was like electric vitality flashing for one brief moment into a dead man's limbs.

Chandos looked at him with a profound pity. To him, a man of the world, a courtier, a lover of pleasure, the untutored, chivalrous simplicity of this idealist roused infinite compassion. He saw brought home to Guido Lulli, as a terrible and heart-burning anguish, those amours which in his own world and his own life were but the caprice and amusement of idle hours, the subject of a gay, indifferent jest. He had never before reflected how much these careless toys may chance to cost in their recoil to others.

He leaned his hand with a warmer pressure on the musician's shoulder.

"I wish I could aid you more, Guido; but there is nothing that I know of that has been left untried. Strive to forget both; neither is worth enough to give you pain. You believe at least that I have had every effort used for you, although it has been in vain?"

Lulli looked at him with a slight smile,—a smile that passed over the suffering and the momentary passion on his face like an irradiation of light. It was so full of sublime and entire faith.

"Believe *you*, monseigneur? Yes, as I believe in God."

It was the simple truth, and paid back to Chandos his own love for men, and faith in them, in his own coin.

"I thank you. I am *your* debtor, then, Lulli," he said, gently. "I must leave you now, or I shall have no sleep before the day is fairly up; but I will see you again some time during the morning. If you think of anything that has not been done, or might be done again, with any hope to find Valeria, tell me, and I will give directions for it. Adieu!"

He left the chamber, the flash of his diamonds and the imperial blue of his dress glancing bright in the beams of the young day. Lulli turned his head, and followed him with the wistful gaze that

seemed to come from so far a distance,—followed him as the eyes of a dog follow the shadow of its master.

"So generous, so pitiful, so gentle, so noble! If I could only live to repay him!" he murmured, half aloud, as the door closed upon the kingly grace and splendid manhood of his saviour and his solitary friend. Vast as was the contrast, hopelessly wide as was the disparity between them, there was not one pang of jealousy in the loyal heart of the crippled musician.

Then, with the last echo of his patron's step, his head drooped again, and the listless, lifeless passiveness, the weary and suffering indifference, which always lay so heavily upon him, save at such times when his affections or his art struck new vitality through him, returned once more, while his fingers lay motionless upon the ivory keys. Although happy (as far as happiness could be in common with his shattered and stricken life), in the artistic seclusion in which he was allowed to dwell, and in the unbroken pursuit of his art which Chandos enabled him to enjoy, there was one sorrow on him weightier than any of his personal afflictions.

The only thing that had ever loved him was a child, several years younger than himself, his cousin, orphaned and penniless like himself, to keep whom in some poor shape of comfort, in their old home of Arles, Lulli had beggared his own poverty till—sending to her every coin that he possessed—he had been near his grave from sheer famine when Chandos had found him among the hills of the Vega. For some time he had never mentioned the name of Valeria to his patron, from the shrinking and sensitive delicacy of his nature, which dreaded to press another supplicant and dependant on his patron's charity. All he could give he sent to Arles for Valeria Lulli, who was lodged with an old canoness of the city, and began to be noted, as she grew older, as the most perfect contralto in the girls' choir in all Southern France. See her he could not; a sense of duty to the man by whom he had been redeemed from death, and the infirmities of his own health, which that nigh approach of death had more utterly enfeebled, prevented him from returning to Provence. But he heard of her; he heard from her; he knew that she was drawing near womanhood in safe shelter, and a happy, if obscure, home, through him; and it sufficed for him. His affection for her was the tender solicitude of a brother, shut out from any tinge of a warmer emotion, both through his own sense of how utterly banned from him by his calamity was all thought of woman's love, and through his own memory of Valeria, which was but of a fair and loving child.

Two years before this morning in which Chandos listened to the *Tantum Ergo*, a heavy blow fell on the musician, smiting down all the fond, vague thoughts with which he had associated Valeria's dawning womanhood with the dawning success of his own ambition in his art. A long silence had passed by, bringing no tidings of her, when his anxiety grew uncontrollable and knew itself powerless; he had passionately repented of the silence he had preserved on her name to his only friend. He inquired tidings of the canoness, but received none. Chandos was away, yachting in the

Mediterranean, and spending the late summer and the autumn in the East; the winter also he spent in Paris. When, with the spring, Lulli saw him once more, he told him at length of Valeria, and entreated his aid to learn the cause of the silence that had fallen between him and Arles. Chandos gave it willingly; he sent his own courier abroad to inquire for the young choral singer. All answer with which he returned was that the canoness had died in the course of that summer, that Valeria Lulli had disappeared from the city, and that neither priest nor layman could tell more, save that it was the general supposition that she had fled with a handsome milord, who had visited the cathedral, heard her singing, learned her residence, and visited her often during the summer months. He too had left Arles without any one remembering his name or knowing where he had gone. The gossips of the still solemn old Roman city had noted him often with Valeria at vesper-time, and underneath the vine-hung, grey stone coping of her casement in the canoness's little *tourelle*.

So the history ran,—brief, but telling a world. To Guido Lulli there was room neither for doubt nor hope; it was plain as the daylight to him, and needed not another line added to it. It cut him to the heart. Shame for the honour of his name, which, though sunk into poverty, claimed descent from him whose divine strains once floated down the rose-aisles of Versailles; passionate bitterness against the unknown stranger who had robbed him; grief for the loss and dishonour of the one whom he had cherished from her childhood,—all these were terrible to him; but they were scarcely so cruel as the sting of ingratitude from a life that he alone had supported, and for which he had endured, through many years, deprivations uncounted and solicitude unwearying. He said but little, but the iron went down deep into his gentle suffering nature, and left a wound there that was never closed.

No more had been learned of the fate of Valeria; it sank into silence, and all the efforts exerted by his patron's wealth and by the ingenuity of his hirelings failed to bring one light on the surface of the darkness that covered her lost life. As Lulli has said, she was dead to him. But the pain she had dealt was living, and would live long. Natures like Lulli's suffer silently, but suffer greatly; and now, when the monastical silence closed in again around him as the sound of Chandos' steps died off the morning stillness, and the early rays only strayed on the ivory whiteness of the carved Passion above the little shrine of his antique chamber, he sat there, listless and lost in thought, his head sunk, his hands resting immovable upon the keys with which he could give out fit music for the gods, the sadness on him which ever oppressed him when he came back from his own best-beloved world of melodious sound into the coarse, harsh, weary world of fact and of existence.

He thought of the bright child whose desolate life he had succoured, as he had used to see her, with the sunlight on her hair, while she gathered bowing crowns of summer lilies, and feathery wealth of seeding grasses, among the giant ruins of the Roman Amphitheatre, where the Gaul and the Frank, the Latin and the

Greek, lay mouldering in the community of death, while the arrowy Rhône flashed its azure in the light, and the purple grapes grew mellow in the golden languor of a Southern noon.

CHAPTER VI.

LATET ANGUIS IN HERBA.

"LOTS of news!" said Trevenna, crushing up a pile of journals as he sat at breakfast in Park Lane—his second breakfast, of course, for which he commonly dropped in as Chandos was taking his first. "Queer thing, a paper is; sort of prosaic phœnix, eh? Kings die, ministers die, editors go to pot, its staff drops under the sod, governments smash, nations swamp, actors change; but on goes the paper, coming out imperturbably every morning. Nothing disturbs it; deaths enrich it; wars enlarge it; if a royal head goes into the grave, it politely prints itself with a black border by way of gratifying his soul, and sells itself to extreme advantage with a neat and dovetailing of 'Le roi est mort,' and 'Vive le roi.' Queer thing, a paper!"

"A melancholy thing in that light. To think of the swarm of striving life pressed into a single copy of the *Times* is as mournful as Xerxes' crowds under Mount Ida, though certainly not so poetic."

"Mournful? Don't see it," responded Trevenna, who never did see anything mournful in life, except the miserable mistake by which he had not been born a millionnaire. "It's rather amusing to see all the pother and bother, and know that they'll all be dead, every man of 'em, fifty years hence; because one always has an unuttered conviction that some miracle will happen by which one won't die oneself. How thoroughly right Lucretius is! it *is* so pleasant to see other men in a storm while one's high and dry beyond reach of a drop; and to watch them all rushing and scuttling through life in the *Times*' columns is uncommonly like watching them rush through a tempest. You know they'll all of them get splashed to the skin, and not one in ten thousand reach their goal."

Chandos laughed.

"But when you are in the tempest, my friend, I fancy you would be very glad of a little more sympathy than you give, and would be very grateful for an umbrella?"

"Oh, the devil take sympathy! Give me success."

"The selection is not new. But in defeat——"

"In defeat? let it go ten leagues farther to the deuce! Sympathy in success might be genuine; people would scramble for the *bonbons* I dropped; but sympathy in defeat was never anything better yet than a sneer delicately veiled."

"Poor humanity! You will allow nothing good to come out of Nazareth; a sweeping verdict, when by Nazareth you mean mankind. Well, I would rather give twenty rogues credit for being

honest men, than wrong one honest man by thinking him a rogue. To think evil unjustly is to create evil; to think too well of a man may end in making him what you have called him."

Trevenna smiled—his arch, humorous smile, that danced in the mirth of his eyes, and twinkled so joyously and mischievously about the corners of his mouth.

"If it be your preference to think too well of men, *très-cher*, you can hardly miss gratifying it. Rogues grow thick as blackberries. Only when *Turcaret*, whom you think the mirror of honour, makes you bankrupt, and *Gingillino*, whom you believe the soul of probity, makes off with your plate, and *Tartuffe*, whom you have deemed a saint of the first water, forges a little bill on your name, blame nobody but your own delightful and expensive optimism; that's all! Don't you know you think too well of *me?*"

There was a shade of earnestness and, for the instant, of regret in his bold, bright eyes, as they fastened themselves on Chandos'; there was, for the moment, one faint impulse of compunction and of conscience in his heart. He knew that the man before him trusted him so utterly, so loyally; he knew that the witness of the world to sink and shame him would only have made the hand of Ernest Chandos close firmer on his own. That hand was stretched out now in a gesture of generous frank grace, of true and gallant friendship.

"You know I have no fear of that. Our friendship is of too old a date."

Trevenna hesitated a moment, one slight, impalpable second of time, not to be counted, not to be noted; then his hand closed on that held out him.

The momentary better thought had gone from him. When he took the hand of Chandos thus, few criminals had ever fallen lower than he. Were Catholic fancies true, and "guardian angels with us as we walk," his guardian spirit would have left Trevenna then for ever.

"Well," he said, with his mirthful and ringing laugh, like his voice, clear and resonant as a clarion, "you found me in no irreproachable place, *mon prince*, at any rate; so you can't complain if I turn out a scamp. A debtor's prison wasn't precisely the place for the lord of Clarencieux to choose an ally."

"Many a 'lord of Clarencieux' has gamed away his wit and his wealth—which was your only sin then, my dear fellow. I am not afraid of the consequences. So many people who speak well of themselves are worth nothing, that by inverse ratio, Trevenna, you, who speak so ill of yourself, must be worth a great deal. You look at some things from too low a standing-point, to my fancy, to be sure; but you see as high as your stature will let you, I suppose."

"Of course, literally and metaphorically, you're a very tall man, and I'm a very short; and, literally and metaphorically, if you see stars I don't, I see puddles you don't; if you watch for planets I forget, I watch for quicksands you forget. My stature will be

the more useful of the two in the end. Apropos of quicksands, the first architect of them in the country was magnificent on the Cat Tax last night."

"Who? Milverton?"

"Yes, Milverton. As if you'd forgotten who was Exchequer! If he were a handsome *coryphée*, now you'd be eager to hear every syllable about the *début*. The speech was superb. To hear him! he drew the line so admirably between the necessary and humble mouser, helpmate of the housewife, and the pampered, idle Angora, fed on panada, and kept from caprice; he touched so inimitably on the cat in Egypt and Cyprus, tracing the steps by which a deity had become a drudge, and the once-sacred life been set to preserve the pantries from mice; he threw so choice a sop to the Exeter Hall party by alluding to its fall as a meet judgment on a heathen deity, and richly merited by a creature that was mentioned in Herodotus, and not in the Bible; he sprinkled the whole so classically with Greek quotations that greatly imposed the House, and greatly posed it, its members having derived hazy Attic notions from the Greek cribs at the Universities, and Grote on rainy afternoons in the country. By Jove, the whole thing was masterly! The Budget will pass both Chambers."

Chandos laughed as he ate the mellowest of peaches.

"And that you call public life? a slavery to send straws down the wind, and twist cables of sand! The other evening I drove Milverton to Claire Rahel's. Just at her door a hansom tore after us, his Whip dashed up; the House was about to divide; Milverton must go down directly. And he went. There is an existence to spend! Fancy the empty platitudes of the benches, instead of the bright *mots* at Rahel's; the empty froth of placemen patriots, instead of the tasteful foam of sparkling Moselle!"

"Fie, fie, Chandos! You shouldn't satirise St. Stephen's, out of filial respect."

"The St. Stephen's of my father's days was a very different affair. They are not politicians now, they are only placemen; they don't dictate to the press, the press dictates to them; they don't care how the country is lowered, they only care to keep in office. When there is an European simoom blowing through the House, I may come and look on: so long as they brew storms in the saucer, I have no inclination for the tea-party. Would *you* like public life, Trevenna?"

"I? What's the good of my liking anything? I'm a Pariah of the *pavé*, a Chicot to the clubs; I can only float myself in dinner-stories and gossip."

"Gossip! You inherit the souls of Pepys and Grimm. That such a clever fellow as you can——"

"Precisely because I am a clever fellow do I collect what everybody loves, except *raffineurs* like yourself. I am never so welcome as when I take about a charmingly chosen bundle of characters to be crushed and reputations to be cracked. To slander his neighbour is indirectly to flatter your listener; of course, slander is welcome. Every one likes to hear something bad of some-

body else; it enhances his comfort when he *is* comfortable, and makes him think 'somebody's worse off than I am' when he isn't."

"I wonder if there were ever such a combination of Theophrastus' bitterness and Plautus' good humour in any living being before you, Trevenna? You judge humanity like Rochefoucauld, and laugh with it like Falstaff; and you tell men that they are all rascals as merrily as if you said they were all angels."

"A great deal more merrily, I suspect. One can get a good deal of merriment out of rogues; there is no better company under the sun; but angels would be uncommonly heavy work. Sin's the best salt."

"Mr. Paul Leslie is waiting, sir," said the groom of the chambers, approaching his master.

"Quite right; I will see him in the library."

"Paul Leslie? That's a new name; I don't know it," said Trevenna, who made a point of knowing every one who came to his host, no matter how insignificant.

"Very likely. He never gives dinners, and could not lend you a sou."

There was a certain careless, disdainful irony in the words, half unconscious to Chandos himself. He had all the manner of the *vieille cour*, all its stately grace, and all its delicate disdain; and cordial as his regard was for Trevenna, and sincere as was his belief that the bluntness and professed egotism of the man covered a thousand good qualities and proclaimed a candour bright and open as the day, he was not, he could not be, blind to the fact that Trevenna never sought or heeded any living soul except those who could benefit him.

"I understand," laughed Trevenna; with a riding-whip about his shoulders he would still have laughed good-naturedly. "One of your *protégés*, of course; some Giotto who was drawing sheep when the Clarencieux Cimabue saw him; some starving Chatterton who has plucked up heart of grace to write and ask the author of 'Lucrèce' to give him the *magna nominis umbra*. Tell him to turn navvy or corn-chandler, Chandos, before he worships the Muses without having five thousand a year to support those dissipated ladies upon; and twenty years hence he'll thank you while he eats his fat bacon with a relish in the pot-house, or weighs out his pottles of barley in sensible contentment."

"You are a thorough Englishman, Trevenna; you would make a poet an exciseman, and expect him to be serenely grateful for the patronage! Pray, how many of those who honour 'the Muses,' as you call them, have had five thousand a year, or had even their daily bread when they started, for that matter? I must give this boy his audience, so I may not see you till we meet in the park or the clubs. You dine with me to-night? There are a triad of Serene Highnesses coming, and German royalty is terribly oppressive society."

"Oh, I will be here, monseigneur; I obey orders. You want me at your dinners as Valois wanted Triboulet, eh? The jester is

welcomed for the nonsense he talks, and may be more familiar than guests of higher degree."

"Triboulet? What are you thinking of? Men of your talent bring their own welcome, and are far more creditor than debtor to society. Surely Trevenna, you never misdoubt the sincerity of my friendship?"

The other looked up with his bright *bonhomie*.

"You are a Sir Caladore of courtesy. No; I am as sure of the quality of your friendship as I am of the quality of your clarets. I can't say more; and, as the world bows down before you, the distinction of it is very gratifying. Besides, you have the best *chef* in town; and I dearly love a friend that gives good dinners."

Chandos laughed. Trevenna always amused him; the utter absence of flattery refreshed him, and he knew the world too well not to know that sincerity and warmth of feeling were full as likely to lie under the frankly confessed egotism as under the suaver protestations of other men. Yet the answer chilled him ever so slightly, jarred on him ever so faintly. A temperament that is *never* earnest is at times well-nigh as wearisome as a temperament that is never gay; there comes a time when, if you can never touch to any depth, the ceaseless froth and brightness of the surface will create a certain sense of impatience, a certain sense o' want. He felt this for the moment with Trevenna.

"No wonder the women are so fond of the caresses of those *mains blanches*, they are as white, and as soft, and as delicate as a girl's—curse him!" thought Trevenna, while his eyes glanced from Chandos' hand, as it fell from his shoulder, and on to his own, which was broad, strong, and coarse, both in shape and in fibre, though tenacious in hold, and characteristic in form. The hand of Chandos was the hand of the aristocrat and of the artist moulded in one; Trevenna's that of the working-man, of the agile gymnast, of the hardy mountain-climber.

The thought was petty and passionate as any woman's—the envy puerile and angered to a feminine and childish littleness. But this was Trevenna's one weakness, this jealousy of all these differences of caste and of breeding, as his sonnets were Richelieu's as his paintings were Goethe's, as his deformed limb was Byron's.

The warm friendship offered him and proved to him was forgotten in the smart of a small, wounded vanity. A straw misplaced will make us enemies; a millstone of benefits hung about his neck may fail to anchor down by us a single friend. We may lavish what we will—kindly thought, loyal service, untiring aid and generous deed—and they are all but as oil to the burning, a fuel to the flame, when spent upon those who are jealous of us.

Despite, however, his hearty curse upon his host, Trevenna went on with his breakfast complacently, while Chandos left him to give audience (and something more) to the young artist, a clever boy without a sou, with the talent of a Scheffer and the poverty of a Chatterton, whom he was about to enable to study in peace in Rome. Trevenna was a sagacious man, a practical man, and did not allow his own personal enmities, or the slight circumstance

of his having mentally damned the man whose hospitality he enjoyed to interfere with his appreciation of his lobster cutlets, liqueurs, *pâtés*, and amontillado.

Then, when he had fairly finished a breakfast that would have done honour to the inventions of a Ude, he went out to the clubs, —it was two o'clock in the day,—to keep up his reputation as a public talker, with a variety of charming, damaging stories, and inimitable specimens of inventive ingenuity, such as made him welcome at all the best tables, and well received even in the smoking sanctum of the Guards' Club. Trevenna had not dined at his own expense for ten years; he knew so well how to amuse society. His manufactures were matchless; they were the most adroit and lasting slanders of all,—slanders that had a foundation of truth.

"What's up, Charlie? You look rather blue," said that easiest and most familiar of "diners-out," whom no presence could awe and no coolness could ice, as he sauntered now down Pall Mall with a young dandy of the Foreign Office, who had played so much chicken-hazard, and planned so many Crown and Sceptre and Star and Garter *fêtes* in the mornings which he devoted to the State, that he had come to considerable grief over "floating paper."

Charlie nodded silently, pulling his amber moustaches.

"*Tight*, eh? Dal won't bleed?" asked Trevenna, with a good-natured, almost affectionate interest. "Dal" was Lord Dallerstone, Charlie's elder brother.

"Bleed? No. He's up a tree himself," murmured the victim. "It's those confounded Tindall & Co. people; they've got bills of mine,—bought them in,—and they put the screw on no end."

"Tindall & Co.! Ah! Hard people, ain't they?"

"Devils!" murmured Charlie, still in the sleepiest of tones. "It's that vile old Jew Mathias, you know; *he's* the firm, no doubt of it, though he keeps it so dark. 'Pay or——' That's all they say; and I've no more idea where to get any money than that pug."

"Bought your paper up? that is awkward work," said Trevenna, musingly. "I hardly see what you can do. I know the Tindall people are very sharp,—old Hebrew beggar is, as you say, at least. How much breathing-time do they give you?"

"Only till Thursday."

"Humph! only forty-eight hours; close shave!" said Trevenna. "Of course you can't do anything if you're not able to get the money. They've the law on their side."

"*Can't* you think of anything? You're such a clever fellow, Trevenna!" asked the embryo diplomatist, whose personal diplomacy was at its wits' end.

"Thanks for the compliment, *bon garçon*, but I'm not clever enough to make money out of nothing. How people would rush to my laboratory, if I were! I should cut out all the pet preachers with the women. I really haven't an idea what advice to give you. I'd see these Tindall rascals with pleasure for you; but I don't suppose that would do any good."

"Try! there's a good fellow!" said the boy, with more eagerness than he had ever thrown into his sleepy, silky voice in all the days of his dandyism.

"I'll ask them to let you have longer time, at any rate. Perhaps they'll be persuaded to renew the bills. Anyway, I'm more up to City tricks than you are. Let's see, what's their place of business? I remember—that wretched, dirty place in Piffler's Court, isn't it? I'll go down there to-morrow morning."

Charlie's languid eyes brightened with delighted hope, and he thanked his friend over and over again with all that cordial but embarrassed eagerness which characterises Young England when it is warmly touched and does not like to make a fool of itself. Charlie's heart was a very kind, a very honest one, under the shell of dandy apathy, and it held Trevenna from that moment in the closest gratitude.

"Such a brick of a fellow, to go bothering himself into that beastly City after my affairs!" he thought, as he turned into Pratt's for a game at billiards, while Trevenna sauntered on down the shady side of the street.

"It's as well to oblige him, we should get nothing by putting the screw on him; he is only worth the tobacco-pots and art-trash he's heaped together in his rooms, and that chestnut hack that he's never paid for. It's as well to oblige him. Dal will kill himself sooner or later at the rate he goes, and the next brother's an invalid; Charlie's sure to have the title, I fancy, some day or other," thought Trevenna, as he went along, encountering acquaintances at every yard, and receiving a dozen invitations to luncheon in as many feet of the *trottoir*. This was Trevenna's special statesmanship,—to cast his nets so far forward that they took in not only the present but the future. He sought the society and the friendship of young men: who knew what use they might not be some day?

Men thought him "a pushing fellow, but then so deucedly amusing," and liked him. He was almost everywhere welcome to them; for he was not only a popular wit and a gossiper, but he was a surpassing whist- and a capital billiard-player, an excellent shot, a splendid salmon-fisher, and as unerring a judge of all matters "horsy" as ever pronounced on a set of Rawcliffe yearlings and picked out the winner from the cracks at Danebury. They thought him "nobody," and looked on him as only Chandos' *homme d'affaires*, but they liked him. Women alone never favoured him, and held him invariably at an icy distance, partly, of course, from the fact that women never smile upon a man who has nothing. Ladies are your only thorough Optimates. You like a man if he be a good shot, a good rider, a good talker—they must first know "all about him;" you laugh if the wit be *ben trovato*—they must learn, before they smile, if the speaker be worth applauding; you will listen if the brain be well filled—they must know that the purse is so also. Women, therefore, gave no sort of attention to Trevenna, but only spoke of him as "a little man,—odious little man, so brusque; he keeps a cab, and lives no one knows how; hangs on to great men, and rich men, like Chandos."

Besides, Trevenna offended ladies in other ways. If not a great disciple of truth *in propriâ personâ*, he scattered a good many truths about in the world, though he lied with an enchanting readiness and tact when occasion needed. He nevertheless satirised hypocrisy and humbug with a genuine relish in the work; his natural candour relieved itself in the flagellations he gave humanity. He had a rich Hudibrastic vein in him, and he was not the less sincere in his ironies on the world's many masks because his sagacity led him to borrow them to serve his own ends.

Truth is a rough, honest, helter-skelter terrier, that none like to see brought into their drawing-rooms, throwing over all their dainty little ornaments, upsetting their choicest Dresden, that nobody guessed was cracked till it fell with the mended side uppermost, and keeping every one in incessant tremor lest the next snap should be at their braids or their boots, of which neither the varnish nor the luxuriance will stand rough usage. Trevenna took this unmuzzled brute about with him into precincts where there were delicacies a touch would soil, frailties a brush would crack, and smooth carpets of brilliant bloom and velvet gloss that, scratched up, showed the bare boards underneath, and let in the stench of rats rotting below. Of course, he and the terrier too were detested by ladies. Such a *gaucherie* would have been almost unbearable in a duke! They would have had difficulty to control the grimace into a smile had the coarse and cruel pastime been a prince's: for a penniless man-about-town it was scarcely likely they would open their boudoir-doors to such a master and to such an animal. Women abominated him, and Trevenna was too shrewd to underrate the danger of his enemies. He knew that women make nine-tenths of all the mischief of this world, and that their delicate hands demolish the character and the success of any one whom they dislike; but to have given himself to conciliate them would have been a task of such infinite weariness to him that he let things go as they would, and set himself to achieve what he purposed without reference to them. He was quite sure that if success shone on him the fair sex would smile too, and would soon find out that he was the most "delightful original in the world!"

"Chandos," said Trevenna, an hour or two later, "I want to tell you something. That young brother of Dallerstone's has come to grief,—fallen in Jews' hands,—got up a tree altogether. Dal can't help him; he's as bad himself; and they'll be down upon Charlie on Thursday."

"Poor boy! Cannot we stop that?"

"Well, you could, of course; but it is asking a great deal of you. I have promised him to see Tindall's people."

"Who are they?"

"Jew firm in the City; hold a good many of your aristocratic friends in their teeth, too. But I was going to say I can't do anything for him unless I take them some security that they will have their money. Now, if I could use your name, though there is no reason in life why you should give it——"

"My name? Oh, I will serve him, certainly, if he be in difficulties."

"Merely your name to get the bills renewed. They'll trust that."

"But I suppose his debts are not very great?—he is such a lad. Would it not be better to buy his paper out of these Hebrews' hands?"

"Mercy on us, monseigneur!" cried Trevenna. "If you don't talk as coolly of buying up any unknown quantity of bills as of buying a cigar-case! No: there is no necessity for doing anything of the kind. If you will just give your name to renew the acceptances, it will serve him admirably. Mind, this is entirely my idea; he doesn't dream of it; but I know you are always so willing to aid any one."

"I shall be most happy to do him any good,—poor young fellow! You can have my signature when you like, though I think I might as well buy the bills at once; for most likely it will end in my paying the money," laughed Chandos. Trevenna's eyes smiled with self-contented amusement as he stood a moment watching the roll of the carriages down St. James's Street.

"That was a very good thought," he mused to himself. "I shall oblige Charlie,—what an angel he will think me!—and we shall get another of the Prince of Clarencieux's signatures into Tindall & Co.'s hands. Ah! there is nothing like combination and management."

"How does that man live, Ernest?" asked Cos Grenvil, as Trevenna drove from the doors of White's in his very dashing little tilbury.

"Live, my dear fellow? I don't know. What do you mean?"

"How does he get the money to keep that trap? The mare's worth five hundred guineas. He always vows he hasn't a *sou*."

"A man must drive something," said Chandos, who knew that the mare had come out of his own stables. "Trevenna always dines out, you know; and rooms in a quiet street cost nothing."

"Where was it you first met him?"

"I? At Baden, years and years ago."

"Ah!" yawned Grenvil; "plenty of scoundrels to be picked up there."

Chandos laughed.

"Thanks for the information, Cos. You are prejudiced against Trevenna. Don't believe all the nonsense he talks against himself: there is not a better fellow living. Ah, there is the Lennox! How splendidly that woman wears! she must be thirty, but she is lovely as she was ten years ago. I always liked Mrs. Lennox; she is really perfect style, and, besides——"

Chandos did not conclude his sentence as to his regard for the subject of it, but looked after her a moment. A lovely woman, as he had said, with hazel eyes and hair, and a half-disdainful, half-melancholy glance from under her drooping lids, who was driving a team of cream Circassian ponies. "*L'Empire, c'est moi*," was written in every line of her classic features, Queen of the Free

Lances as she was, daring and unscrupulous Bohemian as the world notoriously declared her.

"This note came for you, sir, during the morning," said Alexis, his head valet, as Chandos went into his chamber to dress for dinner at the French Embassy.

"Who brought it?"

"I really don't know who, sir; a *commissionnaire*. He could not tell who the servant was that gave it him, but said he was to beg me to see it personally shown you," said Alexis, to whom the *commissionnaire* had brought a considerable *douceur* to induce him to perform this office, all the letters that were sent to Chandos in unknown hands passing to his secretary.

He took it as he went into his dressing-room, and glanced at it indifferently. Like all well-known men, he received so many communications from strangers that he never looked at any letters save those he especially cared to open. We are all more or less martyrs to letters, and get a salutary dread of them as years roll onward. But this little note was so delicate, so perfumy, so pretty, and looked so like a love-missive, that Chandos for once broke both his rule and its seal. Little of love repaid him: the note was of most unfeminine brevity, though of thoroughly feminine mystery.

"CHANDOS,—

"Believe in evil for once in your life if you can. The man you took out of a debtors' prison hates you, if ever there were hate in this world. Under his bright good humour there lies a purpose very fatal to you. What purpose? I cannot tell you. Watch, and you may unmask it. All I entreat of you is, be on your guard; and do not let your own heedless generosity, your own loyal and gallant faith, betray you into the hands of a traitor. Give no trust, give no friendship, to Trevenna: 'latet anguis in herbâ.'

"Your most sincere Well-wisher."

Chandos read the note, then crushed it up and flung it from him. A certain chilliness had passed over him at the words that attacked in the dark the man whom he had so long trusted and befriended. Belief in it, even for a second, had not power to touch him. An anonymous note of course brought its own condemnation with it; but suspicion in any shape was so utterly alien and abhorrent to him that its mere suggestion repelled him. Suspicion, to frank and generous tempers, is a cowardice, a treachery, a vile and creeping thing that dares not brave the daylight. The attack, the innuendo, the unauthenticated charge, only rallied him nearer him whom they impugned, not from obstinacy or from waywardness,—his nature was too gentle to have a touch of either,—but simply from the chivalry in his temperament that drew him to those who were slandered, and the loyalty in his friendship that clung closer to his friend when in need.

"Poor Trevenna! Some lady's vengeance, I suppose. If she

were not too clever for any such folly, and too generous for any such slander, I should say the writing was Beatrix Lennox's: it is very like, though disguised," he thought, as he glanced at the note where it lay among the azure silk and laces of his bed, where it had fallen.

It left a transient pain, impatience, and depression on him for ten minutes after its reception. To have read the mere suggestion of perfidy in the man he trusted made Chandos feel himself a traitor; and to his careless, insouciant, serenity-loving temper, any jar of a harsher world, any breath of doubt or of treachery, was as repellent to his mind as the east wind was to his senses.

CHAPTER VII.

A JESTER WHO HATED BOTH PRINCE AND PALACE.

"LADY CHESTERTON is vowing Cherubino is divine. What queer divinity! What would Michael Angelo have said to an archangel in a tail-coat, a lace cravat, and a pair of white kid gloves, holding a roll of music, and looking a cross between a brigand, a waiter, and a parson?" said Trevenna to the Countess de la Vivarol. Madame de la Vivarol was the only woman who in any way countenanced and liked Trevenna, the only one of the exclusive leaders of *ton* who ever deigned to notice his existence; and she was amused by his impudence, his *sang-froid*, and his oddity, and paid him only just as much attention as Montespan and other great ladies of Versailles paid their Barbary monkey or their little negro dwarf, according the pet liberties because of its strangeness and its insignificance.

"Droll life, a public singer's," went on Trevenna, who could not keep his tongue quiet even through a morning concert, and who, moreover, hated music heartily, and could not have told "*Mose in Egitto*" from "Yankee Doodle." "Subsists on his clavicle, and keeps his bank-balance in his thorax; knows his funds will go down if he hatches up a sore throat, and loses all his capital if he catches a cough; lunches off cutlets and claret to come and sing 'The moon rides high,' in broad daylight; and cries '*Io son ricco e tu sei bella*,' while he's wondering how he shall pay his debts, and thinking what an ugly woman the singer with him in the *duo* is. Ah, by-the-by, madame,—apropos of plain women,—the Marchesa di Santiago has given some superb malachite candelabra as a votive offering to Moorfields, for the same reason, they *do* say, as the Princess de Soubise gave gold lamps to Bossuet, '*pour le pouvoir de pêcher à l'âme tranquille*.'"

"*Chut!* I detest scandal," smiled Madame de la Vivarol, "and license has its limits, M. Trevenna. Madame di Santiago is my most particular friend."

"Exactly; of your enemy, madame, I know a detrimental sto—

would not be half so piquant! To hear ill of our foes is the salt of life, but to hear ill of our friends is the *sauce blanche* itself," responded Trevenna the Imperturbable.

The countess laughed, and gave him a dainty blow with her satin programme.

"Most impudent of men! When will you learn the first lesson of society, and decently and discreetly *apprendre à vous effacer?*"

"*A m'effacer?* The advice Lady Harriet Vandeleur gave Cecil. Very good for mediocre people, I dare say; but it would'nt suit *me*. There are some people, you know, that won't iron down for the hardest rollers. *M'effacer?* No! I'd rather any day be an ill-bred originality than a well-bred nonentity."

"Then you succeed perfectly in being what you wish! Don't you know, monsieur, that to set yourself against conventionalities is like talking too loud?—an impertinence and an under-breeding that society resents by exclusion?"

"Yes, I know it. But a duke may bawl, and nobody shuts out *him;* a prince might hop on one leg, and everybody would begin to hop too. Now, what the ducal lungs and the princely legs might do with impunity, I declare I've a right to do, if I like."

"*Bécasse!* no one can declare his rights till he can do much more, and—purchase them. Have a million, and we may perhaps give you a little license to be unlike other persons; without the million it is an ill-bred *gaucherie.*"

"Ah, I know! Only a nobleman may be original; a poor penniless wretch upon town must be humbly and insignificantly commonplace. What a pity for the success of the aristocratic monopolists that nature puts clever fellows and fools just in the reverse order! But then nature's a shocking socialist."

"And so are you."

Trevenna laughed.

"Hush, madame. Pray don't destroy me with such a whisper."

"And be silent yourself," said Madame la Comtesse. "You are the most incorrigible chatterer out of a monkey-house; and one cannot silence *you* with a few nuts to crack, for the only thing you relish is mischief. *Chut!* I want to hear the *concerto.*"

"*Apprendre à m'effacer,*" meditated Trevenna. "Life has wanted to teach me that lesson ever since I opened my eyes to it. 'Fall in with the ruck; never think of winning the race; never dare to start for the gold cups or enter yourself for the aristocratic stakes: plod on between the cart-shafts; toil over the beaten tracks; let them beat you, and gall you, and tear your mouth with the curb, and never turn against them; but, though you hate your existence with all your might and main, bless the Lord for your creation, preservation, and salvation.' That was the lesson they tried to teach me. I said I'd be shot if I'd learn it; all the teachers and lawgivers couldn't force it down *my* throat. I am a rank outsider; nobody knows my stable or my trainer, my sire or my dam; nobody would bet a tenner on my chances. *N'importe!* a rank outsider has carried the Derby away from the favourite before now."

With which consolatory metaphor of the turf, Trevenna leaned

back to Lady Chesterton with as familiar a *sans façon* as though he were the Duke of Crowndiamonds.

"Pretty landscape, that Hobbema? Nothing but a hovel among birch-trees. Why on earth is a tumble-down cottage so much prettier on canvas than a marble mansion? One likes crooked lines better than straight ones, I suppose, in art and out of it. Humanity has a natural weakness for the zigzag."

Lady Chesterton made him a distant bow, and a stare of such unutterable insolence as only a great lady can command.

"That insufferable person! Such an odious *ton de garnison!* I cannot think how Chandos can countenance him," said her ladyship, without deigning to murmur any lower than usual, to the Marchioness of Sangroyal beside her.

The concert at which Trevenna was solacing himself for the martyrdom of melody by watching with his bright eyes for waifs and strays, for hints and grounds of future scandalous and entertaining historiettes, was one of the musical mornings for which the house in Park Lane was famous; concerts of the choicest, under the organisation of Guido Lulli, most delicate, most masterly of musical geniuses, with the *répertoire* as full of artistic light and shade as any Titian, and the performance, by the first singers of Europe, just sufficiently, and only sufficiently, long to charm without ever detaining the ear. These concerts were invariably in the picture-galleries, so that while the glories of Gluck and Handel and Rossini and Meyerbeer floated on the air, the companion-art was always before the eyes of the audience, while beyond, aisle upon aisle of colour and blossom opened from the conservatories. The softest of south winds blew gently in now from the paradise of flowers glowing there; the sunlight fell into some deep-hued Giorgione, some historical gathering of Veronese, or some fair martyr-head of Delaroche; the *dilettanti* murmured praise of a fugue in D or a violin *obligato;* the gold-corniced, purple-hung shadowy gallery was filled with a maze of bright hues and perfumy laces and the fair faces of women; and Chandos, lying back in his *fauteuil* near an open window, listened dreamily to the harmonies of Beethoven, and let his eyes dwell on the Queen of Lilies.

In the high-pressure whirl and incessant amusement of his life, it was difficult for any one impression to be made so indelibly upon him that it could not be chased away and surpassed by fifty others as fascinating; but, as far as he could be haunted by one exclusive thought, that thought, since the night of his ball, had been the young Lily Queen.

> "In many mortal forms I rashly sought
> The shadow of that idol of my thought!"

he mused to himself, with a smile. "Have I found it at last, I wonder? Surely."

He did not think that to seek it here might be to the full as rash, and to the full as vain, as any other phantom-search that had before beguiled him. Who ever does think so in the first sweetness of the aërial vision?

The moment when he had seen her as *Lucrèce* had been fatal to him; he had from that moment lost the power of judging or of reading her with truth and calmness; for from that moment she had become the mortal form of his ideal among women. The shell was so perfect, he never doubted that the pearl within was as fair.

His glance met hers now as he sat beside her just within the shade of one of the purple curtains, where she was framed in a setting of South American flowers, with one faint tint of the sunlight straying, rose-hued and mellow, across them and her.

The softness of a beautiful warmth passed over her face as she met his glance, wavering, delicate, the flush of unconscious love and half-startled pleasure; he did not ask if it were but from the rays of the sun, or if it were from the rays of a sun brighter and more precious to us than the sun of the heavens,—that God of Light we call Gratified Vanity.

He bent to her with an almost caressing homage, though he only spoke commonplace words.

"I had the whole selection classical music to-day, Lady Valencia. I remembered you had said Mendelssohn was your favourite master."

She smiled,—a sweet glad smile, full of pleased surprise.

"You remembered my idle words?"

"No words can be idle to me that you have spoken."

No one heard the answer as the serene, sublime harmonies of the great Israelite floated through the air, and Chandos leaned forward towards her chair, thinking how like to one another were the pure music that thrilled his ear and the proud yet soft loveliness that charmed his heart. It was his way to say gentle things to all women, and to mean them indeed while he uttered them; but here he meant them more deeply than in the mere gallantries of a courtly society.

She looked at him under the shadow of her long eyelashes.

"You will make me bold enough," she said, with a smile, "to venture to ask you a favour that I have been hopelessly meditating for the last half-hour."

"It is granted unasked. And now——?"

"And now—how strange you will think it!"

"Have no fear of that. If I can please you in anything, I shall be honoured enough. Your wish is——?"

"Well," she answered, with a low laugh that scarcely disturbed, or was told from, the music, "I want you to show me the room where *Lucrèce* was written. You do not let the world in there, they tell me; but I fancy you will not refuse me my entreaty to enter the sacred precincts."

"Who could refuse you anything?" he asked her in turn. "Where I wrote *Lucrèce* was chiefly in the East; but I will gladly let you honour my *sanctum*, though the thoughts that have been sufficient for me there will scarcely be so any longer when once you have left the memory of your presence to haunt it."

They spoke no more, as the richest melody of the selection rolled in all its grandeur down the air, bearing with it all the life and soul of the Provençal musician. To those who were gathered here—save to Chandos, indeed, who never heard a perfect rhythm of

harmony, but that he glided on its chords through dreamy Shelley fancies—the music was but a pastime of the hour, a fashionable distraction to amuse a languid moment, a cover to flirtation; but to Lulli it was the very breath of existence. Shrinking from every strange glance and voice, and shunning all publicity as he did at all other times, he was now—now that he was absorbed in his art—as sublimely unconscious of the gaze or presence of that aristocratic and indifferent crowd as though they were peasant-children listening to his notes. He was as insensible to them as though they had no existence. What were they to him,—those cold *dilettanti*, those airy coquettes, those critical dandies, those beautiful idiots, who talked art-jargon without a throb of art within their souls? They had no part nor share with him. He lived in the world he created, he lived in the heaven of melody that was around him; and any other world was forgotten. And in that oblivion the man grew grand, the timid, suffering, helpless cripple became a king in his own right, a sovereign in his own domain,—an empire that lay far away from the fret and fume of men, far away from the unworthiness of life. His head was proudly borne; his haggard cheek was bright with the youth that, save in dreams, he had never known; his eyes were alit with the light of the conqueror; and those among the guests who thought to notice this lame creature with the heart of a Beethoven would put up their glasses and give him a curious look as though he were a medium or a piece of china, and say to each other, to forget it the next moment—

"That poor mad cripple!—quite a genius! Odd fancy of Chandos to keep him, but certainly he conducts wonderfully well!"

"What a beautiful place!" cried the Queen of Lilies, as she entered, at the close of the concert, that room which simply a desire to be able to command perfect solitude, if he desired it, had made him deny to all guests, and even to all servants, unsummoned.

"Too beautiful to dedicate to solitude," she said, as he led her in with words of complimentary welcome. "How connoisseurs would envy all the Coustous and Canovas, all the pictures and bronzes buried in this single room! Why your very choicest art-treasures are hidden here!"

"I believe they are. But the envy of the *virtuosi* would not enhance their beauty or my pleasure in it."

"No?" she did not understand him. To her a diamond was no more worth than a stone, unless it were seen and coveted of others. "This room is like a vision of Vathek. No wonder they call you a sybarite."

He laughed.

"Do they call me so? And yet I would have rather lived on a date in Pericles' Athens than have been king in Sybaris. Ah! I told you it was cruel kindness to come here, Lady Valencia; my Daphne will have no smile, and my Danaë no bloom, any longer. My art-idols will have no charm beside one memory."

He looked down on her with a glance that made his words no empty flattery, as they stood beside a writing-cabinet that had belonged to Tullia d'Arragona. She laid her hands on the manu-

scripts and papers that strewed it, and laughed, half-gaily, half-mournfully, as she touched them.

"But those papers contain what no woman will rival. An author always has one sovereign that no one can dethrone,—in his own dreams."

She must have known that it would have been hard for even a poet's imagining to conjure any fancy more fair than her own reality, where she stood leaning slightly down over the old ebony-and-gold cabinet of Strozzi's mistress, alone with the art which had no other story to tell than the love it embodied, no other thought to create than the eternal history of human passion,—alone with the golden lingering light of the sunset playing about her feet and shining in the deep-brown lustre of her glance.

He stooped towards her, made captive without reflection, without heed.

"But doubly happy the author who finds his fairest dream made real!"

At that moment through the open doorway floated Madame de la Vivarol, followed by Cos Grenvil and the Duke of Crown-diamonds.

"Ah, monsieur! so you have thrown this sacred and mystical chamber at last open to profane feet? How charming it is!—like a piece of description out of *Monte Christo!*" she cried, with a charming carelessness, as she fluttered, butterfly-like, about the room, criticising a tazza, glancing at a manuscript, admiring a miniature, trying an ivory pistol, commenting on a statuette. "So this is your solitude!" she went on, remorselessly; "really, *mon ami*, it is more agreeable than most men's entertainments. We shall know now how pleasant your retreat is when you are occupied—in solitude—with your *paperasses* and your palette!"

"Ah, madame," said Chandos, laughingly, though he knew very well what was concealed under that airy challenge, "fair memories will be left to my room, but its spell and its peace will be broken for ever. As I was saying to Lady Valencia, I can never summon shapes to paper or canvas now that its loneliness will be haunted with such recollections."

"*Mon ami*," said La Vivarol, with the prettiest mocking grace in the world, "are you so very constant to the absent?"

And while she floated hither and thither, fluttering over a *Vita Nuova*, rich in Attavante miniatures, lifting her eyeglass at a little Wouverman, murmuring, "*Que c'est joli! que c'est joli!*" before a grand scene of David, and slightly shrugging her shoulders at a bewitching Greuze, because it was a different style of beauty from her own, none could have dreamed that madame had a trace of pique on her. Yet, as they left for their carriages a few moments later, it would have been hard to say which had the most bitter pang against her rival treasured in silence,—the fair Lily Queen, who had lost the one moment when warm words had so nearly been won on his lips, or the French countess, who had found another given the entrance to that writing-room to which admittance had been so often, and so steadily, though gaily, denied her.

As for Chandos, he consoled himself easily with the happy insouciance of his nature, and went down to dine at his *bonbonnière* at Richmond. Among his party was Beatrix Lennox, a clever woman and a brilliant,—a woman with the talent of Chevreuse and the fascination of a L'Enclos; a woman whose wit was never weary, and whose voice charmed like the sound of a flute through a still, aromatic, tropical night; a woman in whose splendid eyes there came now and then, when she ceased to speak, a look of unutterable pain, a look that passed very quickly, too quickly to be ever seen by those around her.

Chandos—amused by those nearest to him, who laid themselves out to so amuse him with all the brightness of their ready *esprit*, all the gravity of their airy laughter, all the infectious mirth of vivacious *chansons*—was too well distracted to notice or perceive that Trevenna studiously, though with all his customary tact, prevented any opportunity occurring for Mrs. Lennox to approach her host, or be able to address him in any way apart. He did not notice, either, though she was a favourite with him, that the haughty, resistless, victorious *lionne*, usually so disdainful and so despotic in her imperious grace, allowed Trevenna to use an almost insolent off-hand *brusquerie* to her unreproved, and once or twice took the cue of her words from him, and obeyed his glance as a proud forest-born deer tamed by captivity might obey the hand of its keeper, compulsorily but rebelliously.

Chandos had the too ready trustfulness of a woman; but he had nothing of that subtle power at the perception of trifles, and the clairvoyant divination of their meaning, which atone to women for the risks of their over-faith.

The world amused him so well, what need had he to probe beneath its surface or ask its complex springs? That work was Trevenna's business, and to Trevenna's taste.

As a boy, that alert humorist had never seen a conjurer's legerdemain but to buy the trick of it, a piece of machinery but to investigate its principle, a stage but to go behind the scenes, a watch but to break it in trying to find out its manufacture; he did the same now with human life. All its weaknesses, all its crimes, all its secrets, all its intricacies and conspiracies and veiled motives and plausible pretexts, it was his delight to pierce and learn and uncover and hold in abject subjection. To walk as it were in the underground sewers of the moral nature, and to watch all the wheels within wheels of the world's rotation, was an exquisite amusement to Trevenna. Nor did he ever get cynical with it. He thought very badly of humanity, to be sure; but it tickled his fancy that men should be such rascals as he thought them; it never for an instant made him sour at it. He was, as Chandos had said, an odd mixture of Theophrastic bitterness and Plautus-like good humour. He never condemned anything; he only found everything out. He had not the slightest objection that men should be scoundrels; on the whole, it was more convenient that they should be so; all he cared was that he should be up to their moves.

Nor was it a brief or a light labour by which he became so. A marvellously unerring memory, an acumen of the finest intelligence, a universality that could adapt itself pliably to all forms, a penetration that never erred, a logic that could never be betrayed into the *ignoratio elenchi*, and, above all, a light, off-hand, perfect tact that could successfully cover all these from view, were the severe acquirements that were necessities for his success; and by a perseverance as intense as ever scholar brought to his science, or warrior to his struggle, he had gained them in such proportion at least as any man can ever hope to attain them all. There was strong stuff, there was great stuff, in the man who could put himself voluntarily through such a course of training as Trevenna had now pursued through long years,—to the world's view of him an adventurer, an idler, a diner-out, a hanger-on to men of rank and riches, in real truth a man whom not one trifle of the passing hour escaped, by whom the slightest thread that might be useful in the future was never neglected, and who, after pleasures and affronts in turn that would have alternately enervated and heart-sickened any other less sturdily in earnest than himself, could come back to his cheap lodgings to plunge into intellectual labour, and to grind political knowledge as arduously and as steadily as though he were a lad studying for his Greats at a university.

The qualities he brought to his career were admirable beyond all average of ordinary power; the purpose of his career was more questionable. He would have said, and so far with fair justice, that it was, at any rate, the same which sent Alexander into the heart of the East, which placed Mahomet at the head of the wondrous legions of El-Islam, which sent William of Orange to the throne of Great Britain, and the young Corsican to the daïs and diadem of Louis Quatorze,—the motive of self-aggrandisement.

And, in truth, there was in this good-humoured, impudent, imperturbable, brusque, amusing man-about-town, who jested to get a dinner and put up with slights to purchase a day's shooting, the same element of indomitability as there was in Cæsar, the same power of concentration as there was in Columbus, and the same strength of self-training as there was in Julian. Only his Rome was the House of Commons, his Terra Nuova was the table-land where adventurers were denied to mount, and his deities were Money, Success, and Vengeance,—gods, it must be confessed, in all ages fair to men as Venus Pandemos, and more potent with them than all the creeds from Cybèle's to Chrysostom's.

BOOK THE SECOND.

CHAPTER I.

UNDER THE WATERS OF NILE.

It was night in the low, crooked, dirty, unsavoury court in which stood the little rickety door, with its yellow panes of opaque glass. that was lettered Tindall & Co. An unpretentious place, untempting, dusty, and boasting in no way of itself,—its shop or counting-house suggestive of no particular trade, but chiefly filled with a few old pictures, a few old blackened bronzes, a piece or two of quaint armour, a little china, and much lumber. These things, however, remained there week after week. The brown pictures, the cracked china, the old pair of Modenese carvings, the helmet, or the fiddle, were only trifles on the surface, immaterial garnishings to answer the curious eyes of the multitude when those eyes, in passing, peered in and wondered what was traded in behind the opaque panes of glass. Underneath them, as the crocodile sits hidden with the sullen, reddish waters and the broad, fan-like leaves of the Nile above his scaly head and opened jaws, so might be said to sit Tindall & Co., eating all manner of strange things that dropped between their fangs,—youth and age, broad estates and ancient halls, wooded acres and gallant names, boyhood with the gold on its hair, and manhood with the shot of the suicide through its heart, eating them all, and mashing them together impartially, and churning them all down without distinction into one vast, even, impotent, shapeless mass of ruin.

This was what Tindall & Co. did under the flowing mud-hued Nile-tide of London life, and then lay basking, alligator-like, waiting for more. This is what Tindall & Co., and such-like spawn of Nile, can do under the beneficent laws which, by restricting usury with a penalty, compel despair to pay double for the straw it grasps at,—laws which forget that, despite them all, the supply will always continue to meet the demand, and that their only issue is to make the one who supplies insist on treble payment as indemnity for the risk he runs through them. Ah! wise, calm voice of Political Economy, will it ever be heard? will its true justice ever outweigh the gushing impulses of cruel sentiment? will it ever be known that its immutable partiality is as truly gentle as the world at present calls it hard? When it shall be, the crocodiles will be crushed in turn, and crocodile-tears flow no more: but the millennium is very far away.

The premises of Tindall & Co. were cut up into various small rooms; privacy was an essential of their pursuits. It would warn away the antelope that steals down to the treacherous edge to slake its thirst within fatal distance of the alligator's jaws, if it were to see signs of the bones and skin of a lately-devoured brother lying near. They were all dingy, dull, smoke-dried little chambers, with a musty, repellent odour that involuntarily brought remembrance of the Morgue. In one of them to-night, the poorest of the lot, which bore traces of constant occupation in its poor furniture, was the old Castilian Jew, standing in the tawny light of a hand-lamp burning near him. Before him, in the shadow, was a young boy, of seventeen or eighteen years, beautiful as a Murillo head, the appealing softness of an extreme youth blent in him with the fixed misery of a shameful grief. There were heavy tears on his dropped lashes, and his lips were slightly apart like those of one who is worn out and faint with pain. Between the two stood Trevenna, with his bright, open, pleasant face and its shrewd blue English eyes, dressed for the evening, as he leaned in comfortable indifference, like one who is master of the house and master of the situation, against the wooden ledge of the painted mantelpiece.

"Much more sensible to come back, little Benjamin," he said, with a shrug of his shoulders. "Never try dodging with *me;* it isn't the least bit of use. Only riles me, as the Yankees say, and can't serve you in the slightest. Bless your heart, my little felon, do you suppose if you were to hide yourself in the African sands, or bury yourself in the Arctic ice, *I* shouldn't ferret you out when I wanted you?"

His laughing, merry eyes flashed a single glance into the lad's drooped face; and the boy shuddered and trembled, and turned pale as though he were an accused between the irons, wrenched with another turn of the rack.

"Not the smallest use in dodging," pursued Trevenna, as good-naturedly and agreeably as though he offered him a glass of sherry. "Shows great inexperience to try it. World's made up of flies and spiders; you're a fly, and all the world's a net for you; glide through one web, another'll catch you. Listen; you'd better understand it once for all. Do what you like with yourself, go where you like, burn yourself up in the tropics, bury yourself down in the mines, grow old, marry, grow grey, get children, make money; but don't think to escape *me.* When I want you, or when you forfeit leniency, I shall have you. Just think! twenty years hence perhaps you may be fancying the thing blown over, you may be living in luxury, even,—who knows?—yonder there among your precious Spanish vines; you may be in love and have some soft Andalusian for your wife; you may have friends who think you a mirror of probity, brats who will own your name, all sorts of stakes in life, all sorts of ties to it; and just then, if I want you—Presto! I shall be down upon you. So never feel sure, that's all; and never try dodging."

He watched the boy as he spoke, winding up all these fancies, so foreign to his natural speech, that he might turn with each one

of them another grind of the rack to the soft and helpless nature before him. It amused him to see the agony they caused. The boy shrank farther and farther, like a hunted, stricken creature, trembling and paralyzed, his eyes fascinated on his tormentor as though by a spell. The old man stood mute and motionless, but an anguish greater even than the youth's was on him in his silence; and, as his eyes turned with piteous entreaty, his dry lips murmured, unconsciously—

"Sir, sir! as you are merciful!—he is so young."

"Precisely because he *is* so young, my good Ignatius, must we have him know that, live as long as he may, he'll never be free," retorted Trevenna, pleasantly. "He has a long life before him, and he might get fancying that all this would wear out; but it won't. Paper isn't sand, and that little document of his will always stand."

The boy, Agostino, as he was called, the only living thing of the old man's blood and name, looked up with a low, gasping cry. This merciless seizure of all his future, this damning denial of all earthly hope, this chain that wound about all years to come ere yet they had dawned on him, this desparing eternity of bondage, were greater than he could bear. He threw up his arms with a passionate moan, and flung himself at Trevenna's feet, his bright brow bent down on the dust, his hands clasping the hem of his tyrant's coat.

"Kill me! O God of Israel! kill me at one blow. I cannot live like this."

Trevenna moved his foot a little, as though he pushed away a whining spaniel, and laughed as he looked down on him.

"*Cher* Agostino, you would make a capital actor. I think I'll put you on the stage; you'd be a first-rate *Romeo*, or *Ion*."

The kick, the laugh, the words, in the moment of his intense torture, stung and lashed the submissive spirit of the Israelite race, and the terror-stricken bondage of the boy, into a passionate life that broke all bonds. He sprang to his feet, standing there where the tawny circle of the oil-light fell, like a young David, his rich lips quivering, his curls flung back, his cheek with its glowing Murillo tint deepened to a scarlet fire.

"What have I done?" he cried aloud, while his voice rang piteously through the chamber. "What have I done, to be tortured like this? Not a tithe of what is done here every day, every hour! If I *be* a thief, where is the wonder? Is there not robbery round me from noon to night? Is not every breath of air in this accursed den charged with some lie, some theft, some black iniquity? Hundreds come here in their ruin; is one ever spared? Is not a trade in men's necessities driven here from year's end to year's end? Is not poverty betrayed, and ignorance tempted, and honour bought and sold here every week? How could I learn honesty where all is fraud and sin? how could I keep stainless where everything is corruption? If I am a thief and a felon, what are *you?*"

The bold words poured out in anguish, their English speech tinged and mellowed with the Castilian accent. Suffering had

made him desperate; he writhed and turned and struck his bond-master. The old man heard him, trembling and aghast; his brown face blanched, his teeth shook; he looked up at Trevenna with a piteous supplication.

"Oh, sir! oh, my master, forgive him! He is but a child, and he knows not what he says——"

"He will know what he has to pay for it. Out of my way, you young hound."

The answer was not even angered, not even jarred from his customary bantering *bonhomie;* but at the glance of the keen blue eye that accompanied it, all the sudden fire, all the momentary rebellion, of the boy died out; he felt his own utter powerlessness against the master he contended with; he cowered like a beaten dog, dropped his head on his breast, and burst into a passion of tears.

"Shut up that," said Trevenna, carelessly, while, as much unmoved as though the young Jew's fiery words had never scathed his ear, he took out some papers from his inner coat-pocket and tossed them to Ignatius Mathias. "Here, look alive. Take these; and don't do anything to little Dallerstone yet awhile. If he come here, mind he doesn't know anything about those signatures; let him understand that, quite as a matter of kindness, I looked in to see if you could be induced to take the screw off him; let him think that I'd infinite trouble to get you to do anything of the kind; and leave him to feel that you'll very likely be down on him, and that his only safety's in me. Look sharp; you understand?"

The Hebrew bent his head, holding the papers in his withered hands; they were the bills of young Charlie Dallerstone, freshly renewed on Chandos' acceptation.

"One thing more," went on Trevenna, looking at his watch; for he was going to dine in Park Lane, and it was nearly nine. "I find Sir Philip looks booked to make a very sure thing at the Ducal. His French horse is sure to win, and he may strike a vein of luck again. Catch him while he's down; call in his 'stiff' to-morrow. He must sell up; he can't help himself. As for Lady Vantyre,—one doesn't deal with women usually; but she's been going it very fast in Venezuelan bonds and California scrip. She wants some ready, and she's quite safe; she'll come into no end of money by-and-by. I buy and sell for her in the City, so I know to a T what she's worth. That's all, I think. You may come to me the day after to-morrow, if you've anything to say. Good-bye, young one; and just remember, if you don't want to see the hulks,—don't dodge!"

With which valediction, Trevenna sauntered out of the room, drawing on his gloves, to get into his night-cab and drive to one of those charming dinners of princes, peers, wits, authors, and artists, all chosen for some social gift of brilliance, for which the house of Chandos was celebrated.

"What an angel Charlie will think me!" thought Trevenna, with a laugh, as his dashing cab clattered his way from Tindall & Co.'s, where he had stopped openly and left his thorough-bred

high stepper to dance impatiently before the door in full view of any passer-by. He only went on Charlie's business.

Those whom he had left in the little, close, and ill-illumined chamber were silent many moments. That laughing, frank, clever face of their tyrant had left a shadow there dark as night. The two forms were in strange contrast with the meagre commonplace of their surroundings,—two figures of Giorgione and of Rubens painted in upon the drab-hued dusty panels of the miserable City office-room. The youth Agostino sat motionless, his head bowed down upon his arms. The old man watched him, his eyes, with all the yearning tenderness of a woman in them, filling with the slow, salt tears of age. He was a hard man, a cunning man may-be, a man chilled by a long life of opprobrium, of struggle, of persecution, of pain; but he was soft in his heart as a mother to that beautiful lad, the last flower of a doomed and died-out house. He loved him with a great love, this only living son of his young, dead wife,—this Benoni, who had come to him, as it seemed, with all the perfume and the poetry of his lost Spain shed on his vivid beauty and seeming to revive in his happy grace.

Therefore in his sin he had clung to him, in his shame he had no reproach to deal him; and through him, for him, by him, the grand old Israelite became weak as water, facile as a reed, in the hands of an inexorable taskmaster, who was as exacting as an Egyptian of old.

He laid his hand on the boy's bowed head, and moved the thick curls tenderly.

"You were too rash, my Agostino; it is not for the helpless to incense the strong. I trembled as I heard. My child, my child, your sole hope is in his sparing you."

Agostino lifted his head, the tears heavy on his lids, his lips swollen and parted.

"Forgive me, father, I was mad! And I only said the truth to him, though the God of Truth is my witness that I had no thought to wound *you*, or to mean *you*, by my words. If what I see here be evil, what I learn from you is good: so lofty that it should outweigh it a thousand-fold. My guilt is my own; I meant no reproach to you."

"I know, I know," said the old man, wearily. "But you angered him, my child; I saw it by his eye, and—and—we are in his power. He has been good to us,—good to us. We are bound to bear the stripes that he may deal."

It was said patiently, firmly, and in sincerity. Trevenna had bought his invaluable tool by a few arts which were on the surface benevolent and lenient, and were in literal fact far-sighted plans to purchase a fine instrument at a small price. But the perception of this, even where it dawned on him, did not avail to shake the old Israelite's sense of grateful bondage; nor would it have done so even had it not been accompanied with the auxiliaries of necessity and fear which through Agostino he was moved by as well.

"Good!" the youth's eyes flashed, and his mouth quivered. "I would to Heaven, but for the shame on you, that he would

give me up to justice, and send me out to any fate, rather than force me to live in this yoke an hour longer. It kills me! it kills me! Under his eye I have no will; under his law my very breath seems his. What is it to be *spared*, to be dogged by such a doom as he told out to me?—a never-ending dread!"

The old man shuddered, and on his face there deepened that terrible, haunted look of fear for one dearer than himself, which had gleamed out from the light of his sunken eyes throughout Trevenna's presence.

"Agostino, the life of a convict for *you!* The irons on your young limbs, the brutal work for your delicate strength, the captivity, the travail, the shame, the misery——"

His voice failed him, he could not think of the near approach of such a doom for the only thing left to him on earth without his anguish mastering him. Agostino trembled and shrank back, crouching, bowed, and prostrate, in the same paralysis of horror which had subdued him when Trevenna had spoken. He could not have faced his fate. There was on the Spanish splendour of his boyish loveliness a wavering, womanish weakness, a cowardice, the result, not of selfishness, but of changing and painful sensitiveness; it was this instability, this cowardice, which had drawn him into a crime wholly at variance with the candid tenderness of his regard, and which made him, through his fear, ductile as wax to mould even into the very thing he loathed. He might say that he longed for justice in the stead of being spared by one who played with him in his suffering as a cat with a bird; but he would have clung to exemption at all cost had he been put really to the test, and accepted life on any terms to escape the horror and the ignominy of public retribution.

The old Israelite looked down on him, and, as he saw that pitiful, tremulous abasement before the mere conjured vision of a felon's life, lifted his withered hands upward in a grand, unconscious gesture of imprecation and of prayer.

"May the God of Israel forsake me in my last extremity, if I ever forsake him by whom you have been spared your doom!"

The vow was uttered in all the dignity and in all the simplicity of truth. No matter what his taskmaster might be to others, no matter how cruel the tasks he set, no matter how hard the lashes he gave, no matter how weary the labour he imposed, to Ignatius Mathias he was sacred; he had spared Agostino.

In that moment of his oath of fidelity, the Castilian Jew, the white-haired usurer, the world-worn toiler in many cities, the despised and reviled Hebrew, reached a moral height of which John Trevenna never had a glimpse.

He paused a while, gazing down upon the boy. For many weeks they had been parted, for the first time in their lives, and severed in the tortures of suspense; and the sight of him, even in their present anguish, even in the bitterness of the guilt which had stained this opening life with its blot, was sweet as water in a dry land to the sear and aching heart of the old man. With his own hands he brought him wine and bread, and bade him eat, breaking

through all the custom and ceremonies of his people, and tending him with woman-like gentleness. It was thus that he had made Agostino dependent and fragile as a girl, and powerless to guide himself through the rough winds and subtle temptations of the world. Amidst the deprivation and misery that had fallen to the lot of the Israelite, the child who had the eyes of his lost darling had never needed warmth and light, and the sight of flowers, and the song of birds, and the bloom of summer fruits. Starving on a morsel of dried fish himself, he had bought the purple grapes of their own sierras for Agostino. And there was something caressing, vivid, engaging, appealing in the boy, which had repaid this fully in affection, even whilst he had gone farthest from straight paths.

He drank the Montepulciano wine that was brought him now, and with it youth and hope recovered their unstrung powers, and the dread despair that had pressed on him in Trevenna's presence relaxed. Eat he could not; but as he leaned there, resting his Murillo head upon his arm, and absently gazing at the red flicker of the lamp-flame in the wine, something of light flashed over his face; he raised his head with an eager gesture.

"Father, I have a thought! Listen. Last year, when I was in the Vega, I met an Englishman; it was in the autumn morning, and I was lying, doing nothing, among the grass as he rode by. He rode slowly, and I saw him well. I never saw a face like his; to look at it was like hearing music. He caught my eyes, and stopped his horse and asked the way towards Granada; he had fallen on a by-path through the vines. I could scarcely answer him for looking at his face; it was so beautiful. He noticed it, perhaps, for he asked me what I thought of, that I was so absent; and I told him truly, 'I was thinking you look like David,—a poet-king.' He laughed, and said none ever paid him a more graceful flattery; but it was not flattery: I *was* thinking so. Then he smiled, and looked more closely at me. 'You are of the pure Sephardim race, are you not?' he asked me, and I wondered how he knew; for he was not one of us, but an azure-eyed, golden-haired Gentile. I never saw him again in Spain; but this year I saw a gentleman coming down the steps of one of the great mansions to go to his carriage in the gaslight, and I knew him again; he was in court dress, and I asked who he was of the people. They said he was very famous, very generous, very high in all distinctions, and that none ever asked him a kindness in vain. He is great—you can tell that by his glance; he is gentle—you can tell that by his smile. I know his worst foe might trust to his honour and trust to his pity. I will go to him and tell him all, and see if he can free me. He knows *him*, for he was with him that night."

"And his name, the crowds told you?"

"Is Chandos."

The old Hebrew, who had listened, half beguiled as by a poetic tale, started, his hands clenched on the papers that had been left with him: a change of alarm and of eagerness flashed over the dark olive of his inscrutable face; his voice rose harsh and imperative

in his anxiety, while a pang of shame and of disquietude shook its tone.

"You dream like a child, Agostino! Chandos! yes, *he* knows him, and by that very reason you must never approach him. You have no choice but obedience; you are in his power, and his first law is silence on all that connects him with us. Break it by a whisper, and he will spare you not one moment more. Besides, this Chandos, this fine gentleman, this delicate aristocrat,—he would shut his doors to a beggared Jew!"

"He would not," murmured the boy in a soft whisper.

"No matter whether he would or no! Go near him, and the worst fate you dread will teach you the cost of disobedience. Ah, Agostino, listen. Be patient, be docile; bear the yoke yet a while, and I will buy your safety with my labour; I will earn your liberation with my service. Only be patient, and you shall not suffer."

The first words had been spoken with the stern authority of the Mosaic code; the latter closed in the yearning tenderness of his infinite devotion to his only son.

Agostino bowed his head in silence; it was not in him to resist; it was greatly in him to fear. His head sank down upon his arms once more in the abandonment of a dejection the more bitter and more prostrated because the gleam of a youth's romantic hope had flickered over it and had died out; he thought still that the stranger, who had seemed to him like the poet-king of his own Israel when the crown was first set on his proud, sunlit, unworn brow, could raise him from his despair and loose his fetters. The yellow lamp burned sullenly on, its thin smoke curled up in the leaden, noisome air of the pent city alley; the night passed on, and the boy still sat listless and heart-broken there, while Ignatius Mathias, bent above his desk, passed back to the world of hard acumen, of merciless exaction, of unerring requisition, of grinding tribute: with those exact figures, with those names so fair in the world's account, so fouled in his, with those passages which wrote out the ruin of those in whom the world saw no flaw, the evil entered into his soul, and the higher nature perished. He laboured to free his darling: what cared he how many living hearts might have the life-blood pressed out of them under the weights he was employed to pile, so that with that crimson wine his taskmaster was pleased and satiated?

And the church-clocks of the empty city tolled dully through the misty night the quarters and hours one by one; and as the lad Agostino sat dreaming of that autumn morning in the Vega, with the hot light on the bronze leaves and purple clusters of the vines, and the joyous song of a muleteer echoing from the distance, while the Moorish ruins of mosque and castle rose clear against the cloudless skies, the grand, bent form of the old Israelite, once majestic as any prophet's of Palestine, stooped over the crumpled papers that bore the signature—

"Ernest Chandos."

CHAPTER II.

THE DARK DIADEM.

Ascot week came, and at the cottage which Chandos usually took for the races, Trevenna, with five or six others, spent the pleasantest days in the calendar. The gayest and most fashionable racing-time in the world, with its crowds of dainty beauties and its aristocratic throngs, was nowhere more fully enjoyed than at that pretty Ascot lodge, with its merry breakfasts before the drags came round, and its witty dinners after the day was over. Dubosc, the great *chef* of Park Lane, went thither daily in his little brown brougham to superintend the meals of his master and his guests, and throw in that finishing artistic touch which made them unsurpassable. The party was perfectly chosen, and perfectly attuned to each other: it amused Chandos admirably, as he was used to be amused by life. From the time he was three years old, when princesses had played ball with him and ambassadresses bribed him with *bonbons* to give them a kiss, he had been accustomed to live among those who beguiled his time for him without effort; and the world seemed naturally to group itself round him in changing *tableaux* that never left him a dull moment. He had no need to exert himself to seek pleasure; pleasure came unbidden in every varying form to him, seductive and protean as a coquette.

Chandos loved horses, rode them superbly, and had all the lore of the desert; but the slang and the society of the turf he abhorred. He hated the roar of a ring, the uproar of a betting-room, the jargon of a trainer, the intrigues of the flat. But the Clarencieux establishment had long before his time been famous for good things; his horses had carried off all the best stakes in various years at Newmarket, Doncaster, Epsom, and Goodwood. And now at Ascot, far and away at the head of the field stood, almost untouched by any rival for the Cup, his famous four-year-old Sir Galahad.

It caused him no uneasiness that in certain quarters there was a disposition to offer against the favourite, and that this was done with a regularity and a caution which might have suggested the fact of a commission being out to lay against him. He noticed it, indeed, but with that carelessness which made him too facilely persuaded; and was content to believe the explanation Trevenna offered him, that a rumour had got abroad of Sir Galahad having a touch of cough.

"Very good thing for us, too," said Trevenna, shrugging his shoulders. "Galahad's right as a trivet; and if we can heighten the whisper to influenza, and take all the odds against him, there'll be a pot of money to show——"

He stopped: he perceived that for once his acumen had been faulty, and had overreached itself; he saw that he had tried a dangerous path with a man who, in all other ways, was so pliant

to his hand through the weaknesses of *insouciance* and of indolence. Chandos turned to him with a look on his face that he had never seen there. "Roguery makes a poor jest," he said, coldly. "If any one win a shilling by the rumour, knowing its falsity, he may take his name off my visiting-list. I will see that the horse is given his next morning gallop over the Heath as publicly as possible, so that it may be known he is in perfect condition."

And he did so. Trevenna the Astute had made a false step for the sole time in their intercourse, and thought to himself: "Chivalry on the flat! If it ever come into fashion, we may sow wheat on the Beacon Course and grow tares by Tattenham Corner. Mercy! what a fool he is, with all his talents!"

He did seem a very great fool to Trevenna; but then, as Trevenna reflected, there was not much wonder in that, after all, for the man was a poet—in his view synonymous with saying a man was a lunatic.

"Looks well, Ernest," said the Duke of Castlemaine, where he stood, among other members of the Jockey Club, eyeing Sir Galahad as he came on the Heath on the morning of the Cup day.

"He can't be more fit," answered Chandos, with his race-glass up; "and I don't see what there is to beat him."

"Nothing," said John Trevenna, who was always pleasantly positive to men about their own successes: there is not a more agreeable social quality. "I think the field's hardly strong enough to do him full credit; there is scarce a good thing in it. Lotus-Lily's pretty, no doubt—very taking-looking, and her arms and knees are good; but she won't stay."

With which Trevenna, after his general trenchant fashion, clenched the matter, his authoritativeness being usually forgiven for its exceeding accuracy: he was never found wrong. But it highly displeased the grand old duke, the longest-lived and highest-born of all the dons of the Jockey Club, to have this audacious dictator dealing out his opinions unbidden at his elbow. He hated the fellow, and hated to see him there—so much, indeed, that he would have found means to turn him out of the stand, had he not been brought thither by and through his grandson. He pointed with his glass to a long, low, rakish-looking chestnut that, with hood and quarter-piece on, was being walked quietly and unnoticed about, forgotten among the ruck, while Sir Galahad, Lotus-Lily, and the rest of the cracks, drew the eyes and awoke the admiration of the Heath.

"You are false to your order, sir," he said, grimly. "There's the horse you should back, if you were true to your form—a 'rank outsider,' entered under an *alias*, came from nobody-knows-where, and foisted into running for a cup while he should be standing in a cab. You should have sympathy, sir!"

Trevenna could have hurled a curse at his white hairs, with the snarl of a furious dog, so bitterly the arrow rankled, so keenly he felt that this man alone read him as he was. But he had trained himself better; he laughed without a sign of temper.

"An awkward brute! I don't fancy him. Who likes their own

order, duke? You find *yours* so dull sometimes that you come to the brains of Nobodies to amuse you!"

"Fellow can always hit you back again," thought his Grace, "and never shows when he's struck. But that overdone good humour means mischief: if a man smile under an affront, he may be above, but he's much more likely to be beneath, resenting it. Now, I'd have respected the fellow if he had showed fight in hard earnest; but he laughs at too much not to mean to take his measure out for it some day."

The saddling-bell rang, the telegram-board was hoisted up, the start was given; the field swept out like a fan, disentangling one from another, a confused mass, for a moment, of bright and various hues. Then from the press there launched forward, with the well-known, light, stretching stride that covered distance so marvellously, the Clarencieux favourite, shaking himself clear of all the running, and leading at a canter, which, unextended and easy as it was, left even Lotus-Lily and Queen of the Fairies behind by two lengths. All eyes on the course and the stands were fastened on the match between the cracks. Scarce any one noted among the ruck one chestnut outsider, ugly, awkward, but with great girth of barrel and power of action, which, ridden with singularly fine judgment by a Yorkshire jock of a little known and merely local reputation, was quietly singling out from the rest, and warily waiting on, the two favourites—so warily, that imperceptibly, yet surely, he quickened his pace, passed the Queen of the Fairies, and gained upon Lotus-Lily till he struggled with her neck by neck. So little known was he, so dark had he been kept, that as he ran even with the mare, two lengths behind the Clarencieux crack, half the multitude upon the Heath knew neither his name nor owner, and the fashionable gatherings on the stands looked at their cards bewildered as to whom this outsider belonged to, with his feather-weight in the unrecognised grey-and-yellow, that was almost even with the famous blue-and-gold of Chandos's popular colours.

Fleet as the lightning the three swept on, no other near them even by a bad third, their jocks becoming but mere specks of colour, whose course was watched with breathless, strained anxiety. Extended now to the uttermost of his splendid pace, Sir Galahad, conscious for the first time of a rival not to be disdained, and perhaps scarcely to be beaten, ran like the wind, the Diadem chestnut gaining on him at every yard, the mare behind by hopeless lengths. Chandos leaned forward, and his breath came and went quickly. The Duke muttered in the depths of his snow-white beard—

"The dark one wins, by God!"

The dark one did win. Nearer and nearer, faster and faster, the ungainly and massive limbs of the Yorkshire horse brought him alongside the graceful and perfect shape of the Ascot favourite; and from the vast crowds upon the purple heather of the Heath the shouts echoed the old Duke's words, "The outsider wins!" "The outsider has it!" A moment, and they ran neck to neck; the gallant crack of the Clarencieux stable, with all the metal in him roused to fire, strove for a second manfully with this unknown

and unexpected foe; then, with a single forward spring, like magic, the outsider outstripped him by a head, and ran in at the distance, winner of the Ascot cup.

"A very clever horse," said Chandos, calmly, as he dropped his race-glass.

"D—n you!" thought one who stood next him. "There is no fun in beating you; you never *will* show when you're down."

"Owned by some very clever rascals," said the Duke, as he shut up his *lorgnon* with a clash, while his eyes filled with the hot fiery wrath that in his youth had been swift and terrible as a tempest. "The chestnut has been kept dark as night. Mr. Trevenna, why did you not take my advice and back your own order? The outsider wins you see!"

"But I did not believe in him, sir; nor do I now. I shall hope you will have inquiries made, for there must be something very dark here. Galahad *looked* well ridden; and if well ridden, there was nothing, I should have thought, on the turf could have beaten him."

"This is no case for the Jockey Club—you know that, sir, as well as I do," said his Grace, sharply, with peremptory *hauteur*. "The chestnut's won fairly, so far as the running goes; the roguery has been beforehand."

Trevenna shrugged his shoulders.

"It must have taken a deuced deal of roguery to have kept such a flier as that ugly brute dark all the three years of his life. Chandos, how cool you are! If I owned Sir Galahad, I should tear that Diadem's jock out of saddle."

Chandos lifted his eyebrows.

"My bay is beaten; there is no more to be said. The best thing to do is to forget it as soon as possible. I will go and talk to the ladies: they always gild the bitter pills of one's adversities."

"Ernest, do you know I have a strong belief that your friend is a most *con*summate scoundrel?" said the Duke of Castlemaine, with emphasis, as he took him aside a moment before dinner in the drawing-room of the Ascot cottage.

Chandos looked at him in excessive surprise. "My dear Duke, that is not the way I can hear any friend spoken of, even by you."

"Pshaw!" said his Grace, with his fiery wrath lighting again those leonine eyes that had flashed over the ranks of Soult's and Junot's armies as he led his dragoons down on to the serried square. "I suppose, if I see your friends forging your name, then I am to be delicate to warn you? You are as blind as a woman, Ernest. I will stake you ten thousand to nothing that that fellow Trevenna is at the bottom of this affair with the dark horse."

"Trevenna!" echoed Chandos, in amazement, yet amusedly. "What should he gain by doing or knowing of such a thing? He has all the confidence of my trainer. If he wants to make money on the turf, he would have made it scores of times ere this on my cracks. Besides, think what a horrible imputation!"

"His shoulders are broad enough to bear it," said the Duke, grimly: "they have borne worse before now, I dare say. Where did you pick the fellow up?"

"I met him abroad." Chandos would no more have told *how* they met at *rouge et noir*, and how he rescued the young English traveller from a debtors' prison, than he would have counted the glasses of wine Trevenna drank at his table.

"Humph!—without introduction?"

"Well, one makes many acquaintances so on the Continent." He smiled as he thought that their only introduction had been through the Baden bank and Baden prison.

"Certainly; but we don't often bring them home with us," rejoined his Grace, with a still grim significance. "What account did you have from him of himself?"

"Really, I have forgotten, I was only a boy,—eighteen or nineteen, I think."

The Duke tapped his Louis Quatorze snuff-box with an ominous dissatisfaction.

"You are a very clever man, Ernest; but you are too easily fooled, if you will pardon my saying so. You can believe it or disbelieve it, as you please; but I am as certain as that I stand on this hearth-rug that the fellow you defend knows more than he ought about the history and the running of that d—d Yorkshire chestnut."

"It is your over-kindness for me, my dear Duke, that makes you so unusually suspicious. I wish I were as satisfied of every one's good will to me as I am of poor Trevenna's. Good heavens! I would as soon believe that my butler plans to poison me in my champagne, and that my valet means to assassinate me as I dress for dinner!"

He laughed lightly as he spoke, and turned to his other guests, who just then entered the drawing-room,—among them Trevenna himself.

The dinner was of the choicest. Dubosc, with a touch of kindly feeling that this great master was never without, having heard of the turf disappointments of an employer who seldom failed to appreciate his genius, tendered consolation in delicate thoughtfulness, by a sudden and marvellous inspiration of artistic invention, producing results with a turbot such as Europe had never heard or conceived, and to which he positively attended with his own hands throughout the critical moments of preparation, watched breathlessly by his satellites and subordinates. Chandos and his guests were connoisseurs, on whom such an *éprouvette positive*, to use Brillat-Savarin's term, could not be tried but with fullest success. Chandos sent a message of appreciation to the great *chef* himself; and Dubosc was conscious that the employer who could have remembered a horse's running ill, while he was consoled with such a triumph as the new *turbot au Clarencieux*, would have been a man whose soul was dead indeed.

"He *felt* it?" asked the master of the kitchen of the stately fellow-functionary in black with the silver chain of office round

his neck, who brought him the message of recognition. "You think he felt it! There is so much in soul!"

"I am sure he felt it," replied the other solemnly. "He has always proper feeling on those matters."

"Yes," sighed Dubosc, "but he has not the devotion that one could wish; a fine taste, but careless. He thinks too much of pictures and statues, and all those trifles, to bring his mind rightly to the great science."

"There is something in that," assented Silver-Chain, regretfully. "To see it really felt, you should have seen that little vulgar creature, that Trevenna, taste it. *There* was an *éprouvette!*"

"Ah," sighed Dubosc, still, "but it is sad when the good taste goes out of the great orders! He felt it, did he? That man will have a career!"

Dubosc's *éprouvette* did not fail to restore the life and wit to the party which it had in some degree lost by the losing of Galahad; for all had laid more or less heavy sums on the favourite. Gaiety and *bon mots* resumed their customary reign. Chandos always lent himself quickly with the easiest will to be consoled; and the hours sparkled along on swift feet and to pleasant cadence, despite the disaster of the Cup-day. Trevenna was in the highest spirits, which he checked slightly when he caught the azure flash of the Duke's eyes, but not enough to prevent his being the salt and savour of the dinner-party, as was his custom everywhere. They lingered long over their pine-apples and peaches, their Lafitte and Johannisberger; and after coffee they played whist in the pretty little Ascot drawing-room till the sun looked in through the grape-tendrils and vine-leaves about the casements; and by the dawn Chandos had forgot his first *contretemps*, his first annoyance, as though it had never been.

In the sunny summer morning, as Trevenna sauntered into his bed-room, he tossed thirty sovereigns he had won from his host at whist down on his dressing-table, and, throwing himself into his arm-chair, indulged in a hearty peal of laughter, that rang out through the open window towards the quiet solitary heather-purpled expanse of the Heath.

"Sold the whole turf, by Jove!" he murmured; "and forty thousand netted by commission, as I live, if there's a farthing! What a day's work! Trevenna, *bon enfant*, really you are a clever fellow."

He admired himself with a cordial, almost wondering, admiration that was very different from vanity, and more like the self-content and self-applause with which a man who has been up every *col* and peak in the Alpine range regards the names of his hazardous and successful feats burnt in on the shaft of his Alpenstock. He laughed again, at himself, when he lay back in the cosy depths of his chair, with his hands plunged into his trousers-pockets, and genuine self-satisfaction brightly set on every line of his face.

There is an exhilaration to the heart of the successful engineer who sees every morass drained, every ravine bridged, every girder made strong, every obstacle overcome, by his own indomitable

energy, and watches the viaduct of his own rearing and planning span the mighty distance that seemed at first to laugh his puny efforts to conquer it to scorn. This was the exhilaration Trevenna felt now. That he was reaching his success by dark, by crooked, by unscrupulous ways, took nothing from his enjoyment. They were to him what the morass, the ravine, and the quicksands are to the engineer. Had his road been straight and smooth, where would have been this joyous excitement in his own victories, this triumphant zest in his own engineering science?

As he took off his dress-coat, undid his neck-tie, and lighted a cigar, he pulled the curtains aside and leaned out of the window into the soft summer-dawn air. Not that he cared a whit for the heliotrope and mignonette odours rising from the garden beneath, for the dews on the blossoming lindens, for the sunrise on the bloom of the heather; those things were to Chandos's taste, not to his; but he liked to look at that quiet deserted Heath, where the dark Diadem had borne off the cup from the favourite. It had put forty thousand in his pocket, or, rather, in those far-away American and Indian markets where the penniless man-about-town put every penny even that he won at whist or loo, in sure and secret speculations; but it had a still sweeter pleasure than lay in the money for him.

"So the outsider beat the Clarencieux crack!" he thought, with a smile. "A prophecy! Duke, I won't quarrel with you: I'll back my order to win."

CHAPTER III.

BUTTERFLIES ON THE PIN.

"ERNEST, are you going to marry?" asked his Grace, dryly, in the bay-window of White's.

"Marry? Heaven forbid!"

"Then don't go after that beautiful daughter of Ivors. She will marry you in a month or two more, if you do, whether you wish it or not."

Chandos moved restlessly; he did not like the introduction of painful topics, and marriage was a very painful one in his view.

"If you *do* marry," pursued the Duke, remorselessly, "take the Princess Louise; she is lovelier than anything else the sun shines on, and has the only rank from which a woman can love *you* without a suspicion of interested motives."

"My dear Duke, I am totally innocent of the faintest intentions to marry anybody!"

Nevertheless, the subject was not acceptable to him, and he looked a little absently out into St. James's Street with a certain shade of uncertainty and of restlessness on him; whereas the moment previous he had been watching the women in their carriages through his eye-glass, with the idlest and easiest languor of a warm day towards the close of the season.

"Marry! No; not for a universe," mused Chandos. A few hours afterwards he entered his house in Park Lane, to make his toilette for a dinner at Buckingham Palace, and turned with a sudden thought to his *maître d'hôtel*, as he passed him in the hall. "Telegraph to Ryde, Wentwood, for them to have the yacht ready; and tell Alexis to prepare to start with me to-morrow morning. I shall go to the East."

His yacht was always kept in sailing-order, and his servants were accustomed to travel into Asia Minor or to Mexico at a moment's notice. Chandos was used to say, very justly, that the chief privilege of money was that it made you quit of the obligation to meditate a thing five minutes before you did it. Looking long at anything, whether travel or what not, always brushes the bloom off it. He liked to wake in the morning and, if the fancy took him, be away without a second's consideration to the glow of the new Western world or the patriarchal poetry of the East; and so well were his wishes always provided for that he went to sleep in one place and unclosed his eyes in another, almost as though he possessed the magic floating carpet of Prince Hassan.

The next morning the *Aphrodite* steamed out of Ryde harbour on the way to Italy, the Levant, and Constantinople, while its owner lay under an awning, with great lumps of ice in his golden cool Rhine wine, and the handsome eyes of Flora de l'Orme flashing laughter down on him while she leaned above, fanning his hair with an Indian feather-screen. The Duke's words had acted like a spell; but in his abrupt departure there was one person he had not forgotten. On his dressing-table lay a note to Trevenna, bidding him make use of his moors in Inverness-shire with the Twelfth as he pleased, or, if he preferred it, give the Scottish shootings to any friend he preferred, and take any guests he liked down to Clarencieux for the magnificent preserves of that ancient place.

These reversions and donations of windfalls and of pleasant places to lend or to invite to were fast making Trevenna very popular among that large class of men-on-the-town—dandies, do-nothings, authors, artists, and club-loungers—who have a certain reputation that floats them in the world, but no certainty of *entrée* to the good houses, and no means to purchase for themselves the pleasures of the moors and coverts. It began to get him courted among them; and he was a very genial host, royally lavish with Chandos's wines, most good-naturedly ready with offers of hospitality to Chandos's empty houses, so much so that men almost forgot, while they stayed with him, that wines and houses were not both his own.

"Gone to the East! By Jove, I'll go and find the Chesterton," thought Trevenna, with all the relish of a schoolboy for sowing mischief, as he read the note and heard of his patron's departure. He was a little sorry Chandos had gone; he never liked losing him from under his eyes; but he was fully consoled by the prospect of reigning as viceroy at Clarencieux, and of seeing the mortification of the two daughters of Ivors. They were as poor as rats; they

could never do him any good. Trevenna felt at liberty to tease them just as he liked. A restriction was too often put on his merry malicious mousing by a prudential recollection of the social status of his mice, and of the use they might be to him in nibbling a way for him into patrician pantries. Here the mice were very poor: so he tracked Lady Chesterton and her sister to a garden-party, and ate his pine-apple in most admirably feigned carelessness and unconsciousness close to the two ladies under a Lebanon cedar. He knew the consternation he should scatter through society by his news.

"I don't see Mr. Chandos here this morning," said Lady Chesterton, turning to him with a bland smile, condescending to be civil because she was curious. She was also a little uneasy; otherwise, be sure, she would never have had recourse to that "vulgar little toady," as her ladyship designated the acute outsider.

"No, he isn't here," assented Trevenna, indifferently. He had now put this handsome empress butterfly on the point of his pin, and went leisurely about it.

"He is well, I hope?" she pursued

Trevenna shrugged his shoulders. "Never was ill in his life, that I know of; perfect constitution."

"What a rude insufferable bear!" thought the unhappy butterfly; but she was still more uneasy than ever, and had no recourse so good as the bear: so she resumed her inquiries. "Do you know where he is to-day? I have something to tell him about Rose Berri china."

"Your ladyship must send it by post, then." And Trevenna laughed to himself as he saw the first irrepressible writhe of his victim on the pin.

"By post! Has he left town?"

Trevenna looked at his watch.

"By this time he is midway across to L'Orient. He has taken his yacht to go down south and eastward."

"So early!" Trained and icy woman of the world though she was, she could not repress the pallor that blanched her lip, the anxiety that loomed in her handsome eyes. The Queen of Lilies stood near. Hearing also, she was silent and very pale.

"Well, Ascot was late," answered Trevenna, cheerfully. "He generally does stay for Goodwood, to be sure; but, you see, he has had so many London seasons, and there's such hard running made on him, I think he gets sick of it."

This thrust the pins in cruelly, indeed, through the delicate wings of the brilliant butterflies. "That coarse horror!" thought Lady Chesterton, with a shiver of disgusted wrath; but her heart was very heavy, and she had to conceal her chagrin as best she might with all the gay garden-groups fluttering around her and viewing her impaled. "Will he be away long?" she asked of her tormenter.

"Oh, dear, yes," said Trevenna, carelessly. "Gone to his summer palace on the Bosphorus; takes the Morea and the Levant on the way. Poetic man, you know! likes that sort of thing;

loves Greece; enjoys Corfu. I hate 'em both. Snakes and old stones in the one; rocks, rags, and bad ragouts in the other. 'Ruins and scenery,' they tell you. I like stucco and pantomime scenes. Besides, they always fry so villanously in those hot places; glad to get away from the fire, perhaps. When anybody talks of the Acropolis and the Alhambra, I always smell oil and garlic, and feel myself starving in memory on a melon."

He glanced at his butterflies as he chattered, and saw that the pin was entering their souls like iron. He thrust it down a little deeper as Lady Chesterton asked, with a voice that, despite herself, *could* not be careless—

"Mr. Chandos will be long before he returns, then, I suppose?"

"Won't come back till next spring," assented Trevenna. "He'll winter in Paris; always does, as you know. Delicious hotel that is of his, by the way, in the Champs Elysées. Clarencieux isn't likely to see anything of him."

Which was the unkindest cut of all, seeing that Trevenna knew very well that the baroness had persuaded her husband to take a little estate near Clarencieux for two years' shooting, on purpose that the Queen of the Lilies might conquer in the country if she failed in the town. The husband had grumbled because he could ill afford it. He was terribly poor; but he had been persuaded into it by the assurance from his wife of Chandos's admiration of his fair sister-in-law; and now Chandos was not going to Clarencieux!

"I've paid you off, my lady," thought Trevenna, finishing his ice. "You've found what it is to call me 'a vulgar little wretch who lives nobody knows where.'"

Not that Trevenna had any particular dislike to these two women, beyond his general dislike to all and any members of the aristocratic order; but as the boy feels no dislike to the cockchafer he spins on a string, but finds amusement in its pain, and therefore sticks a crooked pin through its poor humming body and puts it to pain accordingly, so Trevenna felt and did with all humanity.

Gilles de Retz enjoyed the physical convulsions of his victims; Trevenna, as became a more humoristic temper and a more refined age, enjoyed seeing the mental contortions of his.

And yet the fellow had his good points,—some very good points indeed. He had indomitable energy, perseverance, industry, patience, self-denial,—the greatest virtues in the Carlylese school, which deifies Work. Perhaps it would have been well if both Trevenna and that School had alike considered more the worth and meaning of the purpose, before they gave an apotheosis to the fact, of labour.

If the Lily Queen hoped for remembrance from her lost lover, she hoped for a well-nigh hopeless thing.

The kaleidoscope of Chandos's life changed so incessantly that it was rarely indeed any picture that had been whirled past him retained the slightest claim on his memory. He was always seeing one that seemed better than the last. Partly this was traceable

to his own temperament, but chiefly it was due to the avidity with which all his world catered for him.

Now, as the yacht swept on her gay way, there could be nothing more charming than that voyage through "isles of eternal summer" and through seas laughing in an endless sunlight. Pausing when he would, Italian cities on the fair sea-coast gave him amusement under their aisles of orange-boughs, blending fruit and blossom till golden globes and snowy flowers swayed together against the warm, bright brows of their rich Titian women. Becalmed on a sunny, silent noon, he could lie stretched at ease under the deck-tent, with all the perfumes of chestnut-woods, and myrtle-slopes, and citron-gardens wafted to him across the water, while ice-cold wines sparkled ready to his hand, and light laughter or melodious music whiled the hours away. Landing at his fancy, he would indolently watch the little grey aziola fly among the ivy-covered stones of the great Pan's broken altars, or the fire-flies gleam and glisten above a contadina's hair while she gathered in her harvest of the yellow gold of gourds. Sailing at night through silent, star-lit leagues of sea, he would think a poet's thoughts in a charmed solitude, while the phosphor-light glistened under silvery vintage-moons, and the ceaseless swell of waves murmured through the night. Or, when lighter fancies took him, under the shade of leaning walnut-trees and red rocks crowned with Greek or Roman ruins, where, the vessel moored in some nestling bay, he wound the starry cyclamen in women's silken hair, and listened to their liquid voices laughing out soft Anacreonic songs over grape-clusters that might have brought back upon the soil the gay, elastic feet of banished Dionysius.

He was not sated, he was not wearied; he was what thousands pass from their cradles to their graves without truly being for an hour: he was happy. Oh, golden science! too little thought of, too quickly abjured by men. That glorious power of *enjoyment!*—we trample it under foot as we press through the world, as the herds seeking herbage trample the violets unheeded.

The summer months passed swift with Chandos; by leisurely loitering, the yacht at length wound her pleasant way down to the Bosphorus, and dropped anchor there opposite his summer-palace above Stamboul,—a fairy-place, with its minarets rising above a wilderness of cactus and pomegranate, of roses and myrtle with the boughs of lemon, and orange, and fig-trees topping the marble garden-walls, and the showers of lofty fountains flung cool and fresh under the deep shadows of cedar and cypress. Here, with a French troop of actors for the *bijou* theatre he had some years before annexed to the palace,—with a score or so of friends from Florence, Rome, and Naples, brilliant, indolent Italians, the very people for the place,—with sport, when he cared for it, in the wild deer and other large game of the interior,—with as complete a solitude when he wished, and as utter an absence of every memory of the world beyond, as though he were a Hafiz or Firdousi amidst the Eastern roses of a virgin earth,—here the

autumn months passed by, and all the indolent repose and vivid colour he loved blended in his life were mingled to a marvel.

The very inconsistencies of his character made the charm of his existence; through them, turn by turn, he enjoyed the pleasures of all men, of all minds, and of all temperaments. He who walks straight along the beaten road, turning neither to the right nor left, nor loitering by the way, will reach soonest his destination; but he enjoys the beauty of the earth the best who, having no fixed goal, no pressing end, leaves the highway for every fair nook and leafy resting-place that allures him, and lingers musing here and hastens laughing there. Consistency is excellent, and may be very noble; but the Greeks did not err when they called the wisest man the man who was "versatile." There is no such charm as "many-sidedness."

Chandos loved the East; he had lived much there, either at his summer-palace, or deeper in the heart of it towards Damascus; he liked, of a summer morning, to float down the soft grey Bosphorus water among the fragrant water-weeds, with the silver scales and prismatic hues of the gliding fish shining through green swathes of sea-grass or drooped bough of hanging gardens. He liked in the stillness of starry nights, when the first call to prayer echoed up from the valley below as the faint gleam of dawn pierced the distance, to sit alone upon the flat palace-roof and let his lonely thoughts "wander through eternity," as thus upon the house-top under the Asian stars, yonder afar in Palestine, the great poet-kings had thought, gazing on their Syrian skies, and on the hushed, dark, sleeping Syrian world, and musing on that *vanitas vanitatum* which has pursued all lives from theirs to ours. He loved the East, and he stayed there till the first hiss of the winter storms was curling the Marmoran waves and the first white blinding mists were rushing over the sea. Then he left that summer paradise, where more yet than anywhere he felt "how good is man's life—the mere living," and travelled quickly across the continent to Paris, and wintered there in all the utmost brilliance of its ceaseless gaieties.

He was one of the idols of Paris; its fashionable world welcomed him as one of its highest leaders, its artistic world as one of its truest friends, its literary world as one of its choicest chiefs, its feminine world as one of its proudest conquests. He was never more at home than in Paris, and Paris, from the Tuileries to the atelier, always delighted to honour him, always flocked to his *fêtes* as the most magnificent since those of Soubise and Lauraguais, quoted his *bon mots*, followed his fashions, painted him, sculptured him, courted him, made him its sovereign, and found the wit of Rivarol, the beauty of Richelieu, and the grace of Avaux, revived in this "bel Anglais aux cheveux dorés."

In this sparkling whirlpool of his Paris winter thought had little entrance, remembrance little chance; every hour had its own amusement, every moment its own seduction; *ennui* could not approach, "sad satiety" could not be known. Yet, despite it all, now and then upon him, in the glittering follies of a court mas-

querade or the soft shadows of some patrician coquette's boudoir, as in the star-lit silence of Turkish nights and under the Asiatic gloom of Lebanon cedars, a certain impatient depression, a certain vague passionate restlessness, came on him, new to his life, and bitter there.

It came thus, because for the first time he could not forget at his will, because for the first time a passion he repulsed pursued him.

CHAPTER IV.

CLARENCIEUX.

THE rare red deer herded in the great forests, and the herons plumed their silver wings in the waters, down at Clarencieux. Kestrels wheeled in the sunny skies, and the proud gerfalcon came there. The soft owls flitted among the broken arches of the ruined Lady's Chapel; and teal and mallard crowded in the deep brown pools that lay so still and cool beneath the roofing of the leaves. It was a paradise for all living things of river, earth, and air; and it was beautiful enough for an Eden where it sloped down to the seas on the south-west coast, in a climate so tempered that the tall fuchsia-hedges grew wild as honeysuckle and the myrtles blossomed as though it were Sorrento. Covering leagues of country, stretching over miles of tawny beach, of red-ribbed rock, of glorious deer-forest, and of heath all golden with the gorse, Clarencieux was the great possession of a great House; and its castle bore the marks of Cromwell's petronels, gained when the Cavalier-lord of the Stuart times, Evelyn Chandos, Marquis of Clarencieux, had held it after Marston Moor till the Ironsides swore in their teeth that Satan fought there in the guise of that "Chandos with the golden hair,"—the "beautiful Belial," as they called him, when, with his long light locks floating, and his velvet and lace as gay as for a court-ball, he charged out on them in such fiery fashion that he with his troop of eighty (all that fire and sword had left him), drove six hundred steel-clad besiegers pell-mell, like sheep to the slaughter down through his mighty woods and headlong to the sea. Raised in the days when the mediæval nobles were

> "Building royallie
> Their mansions curiouslie
> With turrets and with towers,
> With halls and with bowres,
> Hanging about their walles
> Clothes of gold and palles,
> Arras of rich arraye,
> Fresh as flowers of Maye,"

Clarencieux, with its tall antique louver, its massive battlemented towers, its fretted pinnacles, its superb range of Gothic windows, its foliaged tracery, so marvellously delicate on such massive

stonework, stood in all magnificence still, the master-work of centuries.

Between it and the great marble pile adjoining, of the newly-made Earl of Clydesmore, stretched a wide impassable gulf of difference, never to be bridged. Lilliesford had cost more than a million in erection, and Europe had been ransacked to adorn it; but the difference betwixt the two was as intense as that betwixt the bronze Perseus of Benvenuto and the ormolu statuette of a Pall Mall goldsmith, between rich old Rhenish glowing in an antique Venetian goblet and new Cliquot hissing in a mousseline glass, between paint and pearls and silken skirts gathered with gracious grace about a nobly-born court-beauty and tinsel flung with heavy hand and tawdry taste around a stage-queen uneasy in her robes and in her crown.

Lilliesford was very gorgeous; but Clarencieux alone was grand. The setting sun was reddening all the antique painted panes of its innumerable lancet-windows; the deer were leaving their couches in the ferns to begin their nightly wanderings; the last light was shed on the bold curve of the coast-rocks and the sea that stretched beyond; beneath the trees in the dense forest night was already come, as a carriage swept through the miles of avenue, and Chandos came back from the East to his home.

Though, in the wayward love of change which would make us weary to wander from eternal bliss itself if we enjoyed it with our present natures, he lived much abroad, now here and now there, he loved Clarencieux with a great and enduring love,—a love that might have almost been termed passionate, so constant was it, and so bound up with every grey stone and hoary tree. With him, though hatred of pain made him sometimes seem heartless, and love of pleasure and carelessness of temper made him habitually *nonchalant*, the feelings were still strong, and were not sacrificed either to the intellect or the senses. He could feel, as he could enjoy, vividly; and the most vivid sentiment in his heart was the attachment to his birthplace, to his great hereditary possessions, not for their worth, their splendour, or their envied superiority, but from a fond and almost filial tenderness for all the venerable beauty of the noble place,—for the sound of its sea, for the width of its woodland, for the smile of its sunlight, for the memories of its past.

He leaned forward as the carriage drove swiftly through the great vales of oak and beech and elm, and looked at it in the glow of the cloudless spring-time sunset. Before him, in the distance, rose the front of the royal pile, all golden where the sun-rays glistened and lit its glass to flame, all dark where the ivy climbed to the height of the battlemented towers, and the rolling woods of the inland forests stretched upward on the hill-sides beyond, an endless stretch of dewy April leaf. "It is almost ungrateful ever to leave it," he thought. "There is nothing nobler abroad. I will live here more for the future."

And a vague, irrepressible melancholy, wholly unlike his temperament, stole on him, despite himself, as he looked at the home

of his race,—fair as it was in the sunset warmth, sure as it was in his possession. The thought crossed him how, ere long, at most, he must look upon its loveliness no more, but lie among the dead leaders of his name, there yonder to the westward, where the silent graves told the vain story of their lifeless glories.

It was wellnigh the first time that the "*memento mori*" had ever crossed his gay unruffled years; nor did it linger with him long.

Ten minutes more, and he was within the immense circular and vaulted hall of Clarencieux, in its dim splendour of purple and gold, of Renaissance hues and Renaissance carvings, with the gleam of armour and the flash of Damascus blades from the walls, and with the flood of light pouring down the double flight of stairs that swept upward on either side of the far end. There was not such another hall as that of Clarencieux in the kingdom of England. At the time of the siege, Evelyn Chandos had marshalled and marched six hundred royalists at ease in it under the great banner that still hung there, the azure of the Chandos' colours, with their arms and their lost coronet, and their motto "*Tout est perdu, fors l'honneur*" broidered on its folds.

His descendant now, as he entered it and came into the scarlet glow of the vast oak-wood fire which burned there almost all the year, looked round it with the affectionate remembrance of the man who comes back to the place of his brightest childish memories. "I will not leave it so long again," he thought, once more, as he passed through the line of bowing servants.

Out of a doorway on the left, in the warmth and the light, and down the staircase, as he heard his host and patron's arrival, came Trevenna, mirthful and full of *bonhomie* as the brightness of the leaping fire whose ruddy gleams shone on his handsome white teeth and his pleasant smile of welcome.

"As your factor, steward, head butler, head secretary, head trainer, minister of the finance, and master of the horse, let me welcome you home, monseigneur," he cried, as he took the hand Chandos held out to him. "London's in desperation at your absence. What a delicious winter you've had in Paris! Never got a bit tanned in the East, either. How *do* you keep your skin so fair?"

"By no cosmetic but cold water," laughed Chandos. "Charmed to see you, my dear Trevenna. No one makes me laugh so well even in Paris, except perhaps my exquisite Rahel. Why didn't you join me there?"

"Too busy," rejoined the other, shaking his head. He had had delightful quarters at Clarencieux through the winter, running up to town most weeks at his inclination, and asking men down for the pheasants, the coursing, and the deer-drives, till he was quite a popular and courted personage.

"What a Burleigh shake of the head! I should like to be told what your business is. Choosing cigars and gathering gossip?" laughed Chandos. "Well, you know you would have been welcome, had you come. I didn't want you in the East, because you

see, my dear fellow, you are not precisely poetic, and I like things to harmonize; but Paris was scarcely itself without you. I thought of you every time I had your favourite ortolans *à la Princesse Mathilde* at the Maison Dorée."

"Ah, the little angels!" said Trevenna, lusciously recalling their spiced and succulent beauties. "Dubosc, even, never gets them *quite* right. I'd a long talk with him about it. I told him I thought they wanted a shade more lemon, and just to be stewed in the Chambertin long enough to get the aroma; but, like every artist, he's as obstinate as a pig, and won't take a hint."

"You might be a club-cook, Trevenna," laughed Chandos. "You would soon make a fortune. Any one here yet?"

"Only a few men; just a few to amuse you. I have taken infinite care in sending the invitations. There are good talkers and good listeners; there are two or three who hate one another, —that always makes 'em sparkle out of spite; and there is not a single one who talks politics. You won't be bored for five minutes. They are all your favourite set. Prince Paul Corona, the Duc de Neuilly, and most of the ladies, come, I believe, to-morrow."

"Ah! Madame de la Vivarol comes also. She invited herself and her *fourgons* are already crossing the Channel."

He said it with a little sigh. He would rather she had not been coming: chains, however silken and sweet, were unendurable to Chandos.

"And you could not say No, of course, to *la belle*. Did you ever say No, Chandos?"

"I think not: why should I? Yes is so much easier, and so much more gracious. No floats you into endless trouble, but Yes pleases everybody."

"Yes is a deuced compromising little word, though," said Trevenna.

"It is better to be compromised than to be ungracious," said Chandos, with a lift of his eyebrows. "I will go and have a bath, and then tell them to bring me some coffee up, will you, please? I shall not show to-night; they will serve my dinner in the little Greuze room. I have a charming novel of Eugène de Moisédore's I promised him to read; and if you can leave the other men and come and tell me the news of the town, I shall be pleased to see you."

"All right," said Trevenna, as his host passed up one of the great staircases to his private rooms, a suite looking over the rose-gardens, and consisting of his bed-room, dressing-room, study, atelier, and a beautiful little oval cabinet chamber, called the Greuze room from its being chiefly hung with female portraits, and such bewitching pictures as "La Cruche Cassée" by that artist, where Chandos dined by himself or with two or three of his choicest guests, when he was not in the mood for the society of the fifty or sixty people who generally filled Clarencieux in the recesses and the shooting seasons. All these rooms opened one within another; and a dainty dinner from Dubosc's genius in the soft, deep hues of the Greuze chamber, with the violet curtains drawn, and the white

wax-light shining on the fair female heads, was as pleasant an evening as could be needed.

"I must see poor Lulli; there is no welcome, after all, so true as his and as Beau Sire's," thought Chandos, after his coffee and his bath. "I suppose he is here; of course he is. I wish I could take him news of that lost Valeria." And, acting on the thought, he went to the musician's apartment.

He never sent for Lulli. The crippled infirmity of the artist made the traversing of the long corridors and galleries of Clarencieux very painful and tedious to him; and Chandos, who never put himself out of the way for a prince, invariably remembered the calamity of the Provençal. The chamber given to Lulli was much like that provided for him in Park Lane, containing everything that could assist or entertain him in his art; and, at the farther end, a single statue in Carrara marble,—a Cecilia, by Canova,—which gleamed white out of the unlighted gloom as Chandos entered noiselessly, unpreceded by any servant.

"Lulli, where are you?"

At the first sound of the only voice he loved, or had ever cause to love, the musician, where he sat bent in the twilight, lifted his head with a low, joyous cry, and came forward as quickly as his weak, bent limbs would let him,—a man who looked as though he had wandered, by some strange transplanting, out of the dim cells of a Paraclete, or the hushed antiquity of some mediæval city of Italy, from all his brethren who found their pale sad lives only solaced by some great art-gift, and dreamt of things that they had never known in the monastic silence of a living grave.

His brown, wistful eyes, so deep, so wise, so dreamy, so spaniel-like in their faithful loyalty, grew brilliant; the transformation changed the weary listlessness of his face, that never failed to come there at sight of the man who had rescued him and to whom he owed all.

"Ah, Lulli," said Chandos, with caressing gentleness, "I wish you had been with me in the East. I have heard no music from all the singers of Europe that has power to charm me like yours. Do you think the voyage would have harmed you?"

"I must have seen strangers, monseigneur."

"Well, no strangers should have treated you otherwise than with courtesy and reverence in my presence," said Chandos, kindly. "I wish you could shake off this timidity, this great sensitiveness; they do your marvellous talent injustice with the world."

Lulli shook his head: he knew that even the shield of his friend's power could not ward off him the shafts that struck him home, the barbed arrows of contemptuous wonder, contemptuous loathing, or, worst of all, contemptuous pity.

"I would do all in the world to please *you*, monseigneur," he answered, sadly; "but I cannot change my nature. The little aziola loves the shade, and shrinks from noise and glare and all the ways of men; I am like it. You cannot make the aziola a bird for sunlight; you cannot make me as others are."

Chandos looked down on him with an almost tender compassion.

To him, whose years were so rich in every pleasure and every delight that men can enjoy, the loneliness and pain of Lulli's life divorced from all the living world, made it a marvel profoundly melancholy, profoundly formed to claim the utmost gentleness and sympathy.

"I would not have you as others are, Lulli," he said, softly. "If in all the selfishness and pleasures of our world there were not some here and there to give their lives to high thoughts and to unselfish things, as you give yours, we should soon, I fear, forget that such existed. But for such recluse devotion to an art as yours, the classics would have perished; without the cloister-penmen, the laws of science would never have broken the bondage of tradition."

Lulli looked up eagerly; then his head drooped again with the inexpressible weariness of that vain longing which "toils to reach the stars."

"Ah, what is the best that I reach?—the breath of the wind which passes, and sighs, and is heard no more."

The words were so utterly mournful that the shadow of their own sadness fell on Chandos as he listened. He sighed half restlessly.

"Is there any fame that becomes more than that with a few brief years? I do not know it."

Lulli's eyes turned unconsciously to the music-scroll that lay on the desk beside him, the score of passages grand and tempestuous as Beethoven's. "I do not want fame, if *they* might live," he murmured low to himself—too low to reach the ear of Chandos as he stood above him, who stooped nearer and laid his hand kindly on the musician's shoulder.

"Dear Lulli," he said, hesitatingly, "I tried to gain news for you of your Valeria whilst I was in Paris. I had inquiries made in Arles; but all was ineffectual."

Lulli lifted his eyes with that deep, dog-like gratitude which always touched Chandos wellnigh with pain.

"You never forget me, monseigneur. Take no more heed of her; she is dead to me."

"Hush! that is too harsh for *your* gentle creed, Lulli," said Chandos, whilst his hand still lay caressingly on the Provençal's shoulder. "I abhor those bitter, brutal Hebrew codes. Wait till at least you know her story."

"There is no need to wait; it is dishonour."

Out of the dreaming softness of his eyes new fire flashed, and on the frail delicacy of his face a sternness set. Never yet was there a recluse who had tolerance; and the honour of his genius-dowered name was as dear to the beggared artist as to the haughtiest royal line.

"As the world's prejudices hold," said Chandos. "There is more real dishonour in the woman who gives herself to a base marriage for its gold, than in the one who gives herself to calumniation for a generous love. And it may be that Valeria——"

"Monseigneur, I pray you, speak of her no more. I have said she is dead to me."

There was so intense a suffering in the words that Chandos for-

bore to press the wound still so keenly nerved, still so fresh to every touch, although two years had passed by since the loss of the young Provençal girl from Arles.

"Then think of her no more, Guido," he said, kindly. "I cannot bear that you should have anything to grieve you. Life is too short to spend its hours in sorrow. And now, how is it with the *Ariadne in Naxos?* It must have progressed far, while I have been away."

He had recalled Lulli to a theme even dearer than Valeria had ever been. The *Ariadne* was an opera on whose composition he was lavishing all his love, his time, his luxuriant fancy, and his singular talents. Chandos himself had written for it the Italian libretto, and had lent all his knowledge of music towards its perfecting; it was yet scarcely finished, but it was to be produced under his own auspices and at his own expense. It would be the touchstone of Lulli's powers and success, the *fiat lux* which would either consign him amidst that circle of the lost, those dwellers in the Antenora of dead hopes, who had it in them to be great and failed, or would place him amidst the names of his idolatry, Gluck, Handel, Mendelssohn, Rossini, Mozart.

They lingered over it. Chandos heard some portions new to him, and read the score of others, giving it thought and care and interest for a twofold reason,—for its own beauty as an opera, and for the hopes which Lulli centred in it; then, leaving the musician to the solitude he prized, he went back to his Greuze cabinet for dinner.

After that little *chef-d'œuvre* of the genius of Dubosc, Chandos stood leaning against the mantelpiece, glancing through his Paris friend's novel. The warmth of the logs on the silver andirons was behind him, the violet velvet and the glow of the painted chamber around, and the light fell full on the amused smile on his lips, the beauty of his face, and the easy, indolent grace of his resting attitude, as Trevenna drew back the *portière* and entered. He looked at his host with that acrid envy which never was stilled in him, the petty, evil envy of a woman, for every elegance of form, for every magnificence of manhood, unpossessed by himself and inherited by the man he watched. Yet he consoled himself, looking on that pleasant repose in the picture-cabinet, that unconscious half-smile over the witticisms of the French pages.

"Very well! very well, my *grand seigneur!*" thought Trevenna. "Smile away in Clarencieux; you won't smile long."

And Trevenna, after playing the part of host in the banqueting-hall at dinner to the eight or ten men already staying in the house for the Easter recess, went forward into the ruddy wood-fire light to eat another olive or two with his host, and amuse him with all the mirth and mischief of the town gathered in his absence, told as John Trevenna could only tell it, till its wit was as bright as Meisédore's novel, and its relish as piquant as the golden liqueurs.

"What a good fellow he is!" thought Chandos. "I am half afraid he would be too clever for the Commons; a decorous dulness is what passes best there, and a fellow is almost sooner pardoned for being a bore than for being brilliant. They think there is some-

thing so intensely respectable about mediocrity. But still he has so many qualities that might get his cleverness forgiven him, even there. He is a marvellously good man of business, a financier, I will warrant, such as has not sat on the Treasury Board, and he has an acumen that cannot be overrated. I will certainly get him into St. Stephen's; once in, he will make his own name."

"Chandos," said the Duke of Crowndiamonds, in the stable-yard, two mornings later, when his Grace, with the rest of Chandos' London set, had come down to Clarencieux, "did you hear what that fellow of yours—your factor, your *protégé*, what is it?—has been doing while you were away?"

"I have no *protégés*, my dear Crown," said Chandos, wilfully failing to apprehend him. "I abhor the word."

"Well, you have the thing, at any rate. You know whom I mean,—that witty rascal Trevenna. Do you know what he's been about?"

"No. Spending his time to some purpose, I dare say, which may be more than can be said of us."

"Doing an abominably impudent thing, to my mind. Been down somewhere by Darshampton (democratic place, you know), talking something or other out-and-out radical. Why, it was all in the papers!"

"Never read the papers," said Chandos, with a little shrug of his shoulders.

"Addressing the masses, you know, as they call it; coming out no end at an institute, or a what d'ye call 'em. Tell him, Jimmy," said Crowndiamonds, wearily, appealing to a certain fashionable hanger-on of his, who played the part in society of the duke's mnemonique.

"Working men's place at Darshampton,—all working men there," supplemented Jimmy, obediently. "Fellows that look awfully smutty, you know, and throw things they call clogs at you, if they cut up rough; though *why* they use women's clogs, *I* don't know. Trevenna been down there; asked to lecture; did lecture! Talked out-and-out liberalism,—all but Socialism, by Jove! Town wondered; thought it deuced odd; knew you couldn't like it; couldn't think what was his game."

Chandos listened surprised.

"Trevenna at Darshampton!"

"Ah, I knew you couldn't be aware of it," resumed Crowndiamonds. "Told them all so; knew you'd have interfered, if you had."

"Interfered! How so?"

"Why, forbidden it, you know, and all that, of course."

"Why? I have no more right to forbid Trevenna's actions than I have to forbid yours."

"Oh, hang it, Ernest, you don't mean that. The fellow belongs to you,—one of your people, quite; can't have any title to go dead against your political opinions."

"Never had a political opinion," said Chandos, with a shade of weariness at the mere idea; "wouldn't keep such a thing for worlds. There is nothing more annoying to your acquaintance, or more destructive to your own nervous system."

"Then, the deuce, Chandos! you don't mean that you'd let that fellow go on talking radicalism all over the country without checking him, or calling him to order?" chorused the Duke, M. de Neuilly, Prince Paul, and the others in the stables, all of them strict monarchists, conservatives, and aristocrats.

Chandos laughed, but with a touch of impatience. "You talk as if Trevenna were my slave, instead of my friend! Call him to order! What do you mean? I may think what I like of his actions; but I have no shadow of right to interefere with them."

"What! not if you saw him joining a party that threatened the very preservation of your own property, the very existence of your own class?"

"Still less then. Self-interest is the last motive that could excuse an aggression on personal liberty."

"Good gracious!" ejaculated the Duke, as though foreseeing the Deluge. "Then, if you put him into the Commons, as you intend, you will let him choose his own party, go his own ways, run as dead against all your interests and all your opinions, just as he pleases?"

"Certainly. Do you suppose I only sell my friendship to secure partisanship?"

"God knows what you *do* do ed Crowndiamonds, hopelessly. "All I do know is, that I should as soon have thought of seeing Clarencieux turned into a hospital as of hearing you defend radicalism!"

"My dear Crown," laughed Chandos, "I am not defending radicalism; I am defending the right of personal liberty. I may deeply regret the way Trevenna takes in the House; but I shall certainly have no business to control him there because superiorities of property might enable me to do so. You say, 'You have bought him, therefore you have a right to coerce him;' I say, 'I have aided him, therefore I am bound never to make that accident a shackle to him.' The man who puts chains on another's limbs is only one shade worse than he who puts fetters on another's free thoughts and on another's free conscience. But, for mercy's sake, drop the subject: we are talking like moral essayists, and growing polemical and dull accordingly!"

Clarencieux was filled with guests on the carefully-chosen invitations of which Trevenna had spoken. He had the very social tactics that enabled him unerringly to mark out harmonizing tints and effective contrasts so as to make a charming whole. His plan was bold and daring, but it never failed: he always asked special enemies together, that they might sparkle the more for being ground against each other's faces, like two diamonds on a lapidary's revolving wheel; and under his directions the visitors that met at Chandos' house never were wearied, or wearied their host, for single hour. Few houses can boast so much.

According to the seasons, they rode, drove, smoked, played baccarat or billiards, had drives of deer in the forest, and curées by torchlight, French vaudevilles and Italian operettas in the private theatre, spent the day each after his own fashion, free as air, met at dinner to have some novel amusement every evening, and were the envy and marvel of the county, the county being little wanted in, and generally shut out from, the exclusive gatherings of Clarencieux.

Yet, well amused as his guests kept him in the Easter recess, which fell very late in spring that year, Chandos had a certain restlessness he could not conquer, a certain dissatisfaction utterly unlike his nature: he could not forget the Queen of Lilies. Never before had a love touched him that was unwelcome to him, never one that he had attempted to resist; love had been the most facile of all his pleasures, the most poetic but also the most changeful amusement of his life. For the first time he had to resist its passion, and the very effort riveted its influence. He had always forgotten easily and at will; now he could not so well command forgetfulness.

Now and then all the variety of entertainments that chased one on another failed to interest him, all the brilliance of his companions to suffice for him; the wit and beauty of the great ladies who adorned the drawing-rooms of Cheveley almost tired him; he was conscious of wanting what was absent. It was a phase of feeling very new to him, nor with the *nonchalance* and contentment of his temperament and the gaiety of his life could it have the rule over him always. But it was there, a dissatisfied passion, from which there was no chance of wholly escaping.

Moreover, recalling the soft glance of the Lily Queen, he wondered, with a touch of self-reproach, if she had really loved him. He knew many who had. nor was his conscience wholly free from self-accusation on their score or on hers.

The Countess de la Vivarol, radiant at Clarencieux, playing in *Figaro* to his *Almaviva*, riding a little Spanish mare that would have thrown any other woman, always enchanting, whether she talked of Faïence-ware or European imbroglio, lapdogs or protocols, fashions or mesmerisms, flattered herself that her rival the English Lily was wholly forgotten and deserted; but the keen little politician flattered herself in vain.

Trevenna, with his habitual sagacity, made no such mistake, but pronounced unerringly, in his own reflections, on the cause of his host's needing so much more care to rivet his attention and so much more novelty to amuse him than usual. "If he meet her again, shall I let it go on?" thought that astute comptroller. "Yes; may as well. It will be another complication, as the diplomatists say. Nothing like fine scenic arrangements for a tragedy!"

"Reading some unintelligible score of your ancestors, Lulli?" asked Chandos, as, having wandered out alone one morning, taking the freedom himself that he left his guests, he came upon the musician lying in the sun beside the river that wound through the

deer-park. The woodlands were in their first fresh leaf; the primroses, violets, anemones, and hyacinths made the moss a world of blossom; nothing was stirring except when a hare darted through the grasses, or a wild pigeon stooped down from a bough to drink or to bathe its pretty rosy feet among the dew. It was peaceful and lovely here in the heart of the vast deer-forest, with a gleam of the sea in the dim distance at the end of a long avenue of chestnut-trees. "How crabbed a scroll!" he went on, throwing himself down a moment on the thyme and grass. "The characters must baffle even you; the years that have yellowed the vellum have altered the fashion. Whose is it?"

"An old Elizabethan musician's," answered Lulli, as he looked up. "Yes; the years take all,—our youth, our work, our life, even our graves."

Something in his Provençal cadence gave a rhythm to his simplest speech; the words fell sadly on his listener's ear, though on the sensuous luxuriance of his own existence no shadow ever rested, no skeleton ever crouched.

"Yes; the years take all," he said, with a certain sadness on him. "How many unperfected resolves, unachieved careers, unaccomplished ambitions, immatured discoveries, perish under the rapidity of time, as unripe fruits fall before their season! Bichât died at thirty-one:—if he had lived, his name would now have outshone Aristotle's."

"We live too little time to do anything even for the art we give our life to," murmured Lulli. "When we die, our work dies with us: our better self must perish with our bodies; the first change of fashion will sweep it into oblivion."

"Yet something may last of it," suggested Chandos, while his hand wandered among the blue bells of the curling hyacinths. "Because few save scholars read the '*Defensio Populi*' now, the work it did for free thought cannot die. None the less does the cathedral enrich Cologne because the name of the man who begot its beauty has passed unrecorded. None the less is the world aided by the effort of every true and daring mind because the thinker himself has been crushed down in the rush of unthinking crowds."

"No, if *it* could live!" murmured Lulli, softly, with a musing pain in the broken words. "But look! the scroll was as dear to its writer as his score to Beethoven,—the child of his love, cradled in his thoughts night and day, cherished as never mother cherished her first-born, beloved as wife or mistress, son or daughter, never were. Perhaps he denied himself much to give his time more to his labour; and when he died, lonely and in want, because he had pursued that for which men called him a dreamer, his latest thought was of the work which never could speak to others as it spoke to him, which he must die and leave, in anguish that none ever felt to sever from a human thing. Yet what remains of his love and his toil? It is gone, as a laugh or a sob dies off the ear, leaving no echo behind. His name signed here tells nothing to the men for whom he laboured, adds nothing to the art for which he lived. As it is with him, so will it be with me."

His voice, that had risen in sudden and untutored eloquence, sank suddenly into the sadness and the weariness of the man whose highest joy is but relief from pain; and in it was a keener pang still,—the grief of one who strives for what incessantly escapes him.

"Wait," said Chandos, gently. "Are we sure that nothing lives of the music you mourn? It may live on the lips of the people, in those Old-World songs whose cause we cannot trace, yet which come sweet and fresh transmitted to every generation. How often we hear some nameless melody echo down a country-side! the singers cannot tell you whence it came; they only know their mothers sang it by their cradles, and they will sing it by their children's. But in the past the song had its birth in genius."

Guido Lulli bent his head.

"True: such an immortality were all-sufficient: we could well afford to have our names forgotten——"

"Our names will be infallibly forgotten unless we attach them to a great sauce or to a great battle; nothing the world deifies so much as the men who feed it and the men who kill it. Paradox in appearance, but fact in reality!" cried a sharp, clear, metallic voice,—the voice to ring over a noisy assembly, but in no way the voice to suit a forest solitude,—as Trevenna dashed through the brushwood with a couple of terriers barking right and left at hares and pigeons. The musician shrank back instantly and irrepressibly, as a sensitive plant or a dianthus shrinks at a touch. "Halloo, *mon* Prince!" pursued Trevenna, cheerily. "You *are* a disciple of the dolce, and no mistake! Easiest lounging-chair in-doors and wild thyme out; luxurious idleness really is a science in your hands. If ever you do die,—which I think highly doubtful, you are such a pet of Fortune!—the order of your decease will surely be to 'die of a rose in aromatic pain.' Nothing harsher could possibly suit you."

"You antithesis of repose!" cried Chandos. "You will scare all my breeding game, frighten all my song-birds, and drive me to a new retreat."

Trevenna laughed as he dashed himself down on a bed of hyacinths fit for Titania's wedding-couch, that sent out their delicious fragrance, bowing their delicate bells under his weight: Trevenna weighed a good deal, though a small man. Chandos glanced at them.

"Wanton waste, Trevenna! You are the genius of destruction."

"Well, destruction's very pleasant,—of anybody else's property. Everybody thinks so, though nobody says so."

The man had a natural candour in him, with all his artifice of action. He hated hypocrisy with an oddly genuine hatred, seeing that he was as cool a liar as ever was born. It seemed as if, like Madame du Deffand, he wished to render virtue by his words the honour he robbed her of by his actions: for he talked truths sharply, and as often hit himself with them as other people.

"But why can you want to kill all those poor flowers for nothing?" asked Chandos, tossing him his cigar-case.

"For nothing! *Sac à papier!*—is it for nothing when I lie at my ease? To be comfortable is your first requisite of life. Cæsar killed men by millions to lie at *his* ease on purples; why mayn't I kill flowers by millions to lie at mine on hyacinths? Flowers, too! A lot of weeds."

"Oh, Peter Bell the Second!" cried Chandos, shrugging his shoulders.

"A primrose on the river's brim
A yellow primrose was to him,
And it was nothing more,"

quoted Trevenna. "Now, what the deuce more should it be? How that unhappy fellow has been abused for not being able to see a thing as it wasn't,—always the thing for which poets howl at sane men! Why are he and I required to rhapsodize our hyacinths and primroses?—nice little flowers, one blue, t'other yellow, with a pleasant smell, but certainly nothing remarkable. What is this miraculous tongue that talks to your artists in a scrubby little bit of moss or a beggarly bunch of violets?"

"Grimm asked Diderot the same question. You would have wondered, like Grimm, what there could be to listen to from an ear of wheat and a little corn-flower."

"Certainly: Grim was very like me, — a regular gossip," responded Trevenna, pulling a handful of hyacinths and tossing them up in the air. "My dear weeds, you must die if I choose. Ah!—it's fun to have power over any thing great or small. Fouquier-Tinville enjoyed cutting off necks by a nod of his own; I understand that; *you* don't understand it, monseigneur. If we'd been in the Terror, you'd have gone to the guillotine with the point ruffles over your hands, and a mot on your lips, and a superb smile of disdainful pity for the mob: and I should have tossed up my red cap and spun round in the 'Ça ira,' and cheered the Samsons, and gone safe through it all. But good-bye; I'm going to your outlying farms. Did you know I was a first-rate agriculturist? Of course you don't; what do you know about any Bucolics, except the Virgilian?"

With which Trevenna, much too mercurial to sit still five minutes, went on his way, switching the grasses right and left, and with his two little terriers barking in furious chorus.

Lulli looked after him.

"You trust that person?"

"Entirely," answered Chandos, surprised.

"I would not."

"Indeed! And why?"

Over Lulli's face came the troubled, bewildered look which made those who noticed him cursorily think his brain was unsettled. He felt, but he could not define. To a mind only used to desultory dreamy thoughts, it was impossible to trace out its workings by logic.

"I cannot tell," he said, wearily: "but I would not trust him. The eyes are bright and clear, the face looks honest; yet there is craft somewhere. The dogs all slink from him; and the birds

that come to us, fly from him. He is your friend; but I do not think he bears you any love——"

He ceased, looking down, still with that bewildered pain, upon the clear brown river rushing, swollen and melodious, at his feet. Like a woman, he had intuition, but no power of argument. Chandos looked at him, astonished more at the words than he had been at the secluded dreamer's distaste towards the busy and trenchant man of the world.

"I hope you are wrong, Lulli," he said, gently. "*I* do not doubt you are. You and that gentleman can have little in common; but you are both valued friends to me——What is the matter?"

Lulli, as he gazed down into the water, had started, turned, and looked behind him into the great depths of shadow, where the trees grew so densely that even at noon it was twilight beneath their branches, which curled, and twined, and grew in ponderous growth, almost rather like a Mexican than an English forest.

"I heard Valeria's voice?" he said, hushed and breathlessly, while his glance wandered in restless longing hither and thither, like a listening deer's.

"Valeria's!" echoed Chandos, in amazement, as he rose to his feet. "You must be dreaming, Lulli."

The Provençal shook his head, and pointed eagerly towards the recesses of the woods.

"I heard it! Look; pray look."

Willing to humour him, yet satisfied that it could be but a delusion of the ear, common enough with such minds as Lulli's when one dearly loved has been lost, he went some little way into the deer-coverts, glanced right and left, heard nothing except the cooing of wood-pigeons, the note of a missel-thrush, and the cry of a land-rail, and returned.

"It must have been imagination, Guido," he said, soothingly. "Some bird's song, perhaps, sounded like a human voice. There is no creature near."

"I heard it," said Lulli, very low to himself, while his head drooped, and his gaze fell again with the old weariness upon the ebb and flow of the river. He would never have contradicted a thing that Chandos had said, if he had died through it; but the superstitious and ignorant beliefs which the early training of a childhood spent in ultramontanist countries, joined to the deeply imaginative mind of a visionary whom no intercourse with a broader world than his own thoughts enlightened or controlled, had imbued him with, made him in his own heart turn rather to the wild and baseless fancy that the voice he believed he had heard was the supernatural sign of Valeria's death,—the farewell of her spirit released from earth. Lulli had been born amidst all the legendary mysticism and mediæval traditions of an almost Spanish Catholicism. The hues of it had coloured his mind too deeply ever to be wholly altered. It made his grandeur as a musician; but equally it made his utter weakness as a man.

That night, when Chandos went to his own chambers from the

smoking-room, the laughter of some of the men echoing pleasantly from the distant corridors as they bade each other good-night, he opened first the door of his atelier and went up to a Spanish picture hanging near his easel. It was a picture, without any master's name, that he had picked up in one of the dark, winding streets of Granada, pleased with its Murillo colouring, and yet more with its subject,—a young Granadine leaning from a moonlit balcony in the coquettish duty "*pelar la pava.*" There was more of proud, melancholy grace than of coquetry in the noble, moonlit face; and it was strangely like the Queen of Lilies,—so like, that one of her first charms for him had been her resemblance to his favourite Spanish portrait. He stood and looked at it some moments.

"I must see her to-morrow again, come what will of it," he thought.

As he moved away, with all the unrest of an eager and repressed passion come tenfold on him with the knowledge of her presence near, his lamp shed its light full on a scarcely-finished painting of his own upon a rest; it was a soft and deep-hued oil-picture of the Amphitheatre of Arles, with a cloudless sky above, and the lustre of a Provence sunset pouring from the west It had been sketched in Arles itself, two years before. As he glanced at it, a sudden recollection crossed him, a sudden thought sent a flush over his forehead, a pang of anxiety to his heart; he paused before the painting. "*She* cannot be Lulli's Valeria?" he said, half aloud. "She never spoke of him; she never seemed to have had a living thing to care for except her own vain beauty. And yet she was an Arlésienne; she was of the age Valeria would be; she was very poor."

His memory travelled back to the past, far away, as it seemed, even by two years' space, and covered with a thousand other memories in his swift and brightly-coloured life,—travelled back to a time when he had loitered, in the vintage-month, in the old Roman city, passing on his way with the swallows to spend an Italian winter.

"I hope to Heaven not!" he thought, with a keener pang than he had ever before known. "Even a thing as worthless as she should have been sacred to me if that great heart of Lulli's had centred in her. They have never met; but it would be cruel work, for him and for me, to ask him. She was shameless before I saw her. It would be but worse anguish for him to find his lost Valeria in such as Flora de l'Orme."

And he went slowly out, leaving the darkness to fall over the Spanish portrait and the glow of the Provence sun.

CHAPTER V.

THE POEM AMONG THE VIOLETS.

THE portrait-gallery at Clarencieux was one of the noblest features of the whole castle. With its ceiling of cedar, its gold panels, its lofty arched windows, twenty in number, and its landscape beyond them of the home-park and hanging woods that stretched away to the sea, it would have been remarkable without its Vandykes, Holbeins, Lelys, Mignards, and Lawrences; with them, it was the idolatry of the virtuosi. Up and down it Trevenna, who certainly was no virtuoso, and could barely have told a Gainsborough from a Spagnaletto, sauntered the next morning, with his hands in his pockets, humming a Chaumière dance-tune, and reading his letters. He was very prudent, and did not trust the post with much of his business; what was important he generally did *vivâ voce*, and the man would have been astute indeed who could ever have trapped him into anything that compromised him by the amount of a fourpenny bit. He had a very wholesome reluctance for signing his name, and any letters he ever wrote were of Spartan brevity. Yet this morning he had had a good many, and they all pleased him. Some were from the firm of Tindall & Co., written by Ignatius Mathias in Hebrew. Trevenna was a clever linguist, and had some half-dozen languages at his tongue's end, though he never confessed to knowing more than a very Anglicized, Palais-Royal, café-learnt French, which he would jabber villanously.

"Makes you look un-English to speak Parisian well," reflected this aspirant to be a representative of the British nation; and he would only let men find out by degrees even that he had a most scholarly culture in classics, making the concession for the sake of college-men's prejudices, though at Darshampton he would not have had the truth whispered for worlds that he could pen quite perfect Ciceronian Latin.

From Darshampton, too, a mighty manufacturing town, where faces might be grimy but heads were very clear, letters came that gratified him. He was beginning to be known there in their Unions and their Institutes,—talked of there as a rising man and as a rarely quick-witted one. He had felt his way there very cautiously; for he could not serve two masters, and be the Chicot of fashion and the Demosthenes of labour, very well, in a breath. Both his masters would have given him his *congé*. But he was equal to greater difficulties, even, than those of playing the part of *amusé* to his aristocratic patrons and that of pupil to his democratic inviters at the same time. He could make a club-lounger smile, and he could make a north-country operative grin: and he had not much fear of ultimately turning both to his purpose. For Napoleon himself had never more intense volition, Robert Bruce himself never more patient perseverance, than this mercurial *flâneur* of Pall Mall.

He had come here to read his letters, because no one ever

wandered in to the portrait-gallery save at such times as it was turned into a second ball-room, and, having finished them, he sauntered up and down, revolving their contents in his mind,—a mind into which nothing ever entered but to be fertilized to its widest extent. Just above him, as he reached the end, was an alcove in which hung alone one Kneller picture, answering at the other end a Vandyke Charles the First, as grand a picture as the Petworth, given to Evelyn Chandos by his king himself. The Kneller was the portrait of the last Marquis, who had joined the standard at Preston, and fought with Perth in the fatal wing at Culloden, breaking his sword at the prince's feet when the staff dissuaded him from a final charge for victory or death. The Marquis had been offered life and honours if he would have divulged certain Stuart secrets known to be in his hands, and, rejecting the offer with a calm disdain, had died on Tower Hill with his grand, mournful, *moqueur* smile on his lips to the last, and bowed his graceful head upon the block with the motto of his race, "*Tout est perdu, fors l'honneur.*"

Trait by trait, look for look, the Kneller portrait was reproduced in the features of his last descendant. The picture of the last Marquis might have been the likeness of the present Chandos. Trevenna looked up at it.

"Well, my lord," he murmured, a little aloud, in that innate loquacity which talked to inanimate things rather than not talk at all, "there you are, with your d—d proud smile, that he has got just like you to-day. So you began life the most magnificent man of your time, and ended on Tower Hill? That sort of difference between the opening and the finale is rather characteristic of your race. Perhaps you'll see something like it again."

The calm eyes of the portrait seemed to glance downward with a serene disdain. Trevenna turned on his heel, singing a chanson of the Closerie, and only wheeling round when he came opposite a portrait of a man in the gold robes of Exchequer: it was that of the famous minister, Philip Chandos, who had died like Chatham. "*Ah, mon ministre!*" apostrophized Trevenna, "your son is a very brilliant personage; and yet

> Lord Timon shall be left a naked gull,
> Who flashes now a phœnix.

You were a great man; but you and I shall be quits for all that."

At that moment the door opened. Chandos entered the gallery.

"What on earth are you doing here, Trevenna? I have looked for you everywhere. Are you turned connoisseur?"

Where he stood—under the Vandyke Stuart picture—in a velvet riding-dress, he looked so like the Kneller portrait of the last Marquis that even Trevenna almost started, though he was ready with his answer.

"I was reading my letters. This house is so full of people that the library is as bad as a club-room. The betting's quite steady in town on the colt——"

"Certain to be. I came to speak to you of a note I have had

this morning, among others, from Sir Jasper Lyle. He tells me the state of his health will compel his retirement from the borough. He acquaints me with it first, but he will resign immediately; his disease is confirmed,—poor fellow! Now, as you know, the borough is almost wholly at my disposal; to my nominee there will be no sort of opposition,—not because the people are not free to act, but because they are a quiet, thin population, who for generations have been used to receive their representative from my family——"

"Free and enlightened electors," put in Trevenna, with a certain grim humour in the parenthesis; and yet his heart was beating quicker than it had ever beat. He divined what was coming.

"They have at least been better represented than metropolitan boroughs," said Chandos, with a touch of annoyance. "We have never supported a mere puppet or a mere partisan. We have given the little town to the cleverest man we could find; and my father represented it himself, if I remember, for ten years or more. What I came to ask you was, will you like to be returned for it?"

Looking at him, he saw the eager and exultant light flash into Trevenna's eyes, the sudden lightning-like upleaping of a long-smouldering ambition. The daring, aspiring, indomitable nature of the man seemed instantaneously revealed before him, from under the surface of social gaieties and jaunty *bonhomie*.

"Like it!"

In that moment Trevenna felt too genuinely to have words ready to his facile lips. Political life had been the goal for which through years, when men would have called him a madman for such audacious follies, he had "scorned delight, and loved laborious days," with its set purpose before him, none the less steadily stormed because the golden gates seemed hopeless adamant to force. Of late he had said to himself that come it would, come it should. But now that it did come,—the thin edge of the wedge which, once inserted, would open for him all the gates of position and power,—the jester had no banter, the liar no lie.

"I thought you would," said Chandos, where they stood under the Stuart picture, with the proud eyes of the last Marquis gazing down on them from the far distance. "You are the very man for the Commons, and I should not be surprised if some day I come down to hear you unfold a Budget! Very well, then; we will put you into nomination immediately Sir Jasper's resignation is made known, and there is not a doubt of the result."

"But—would not you——" For once in his life, Trevenna was almost silent, almost agitated. The great prize of his life seemed to have fallen into his hands like a ripe fruit.

"*I!*" said Chandos, horrified. "Have you known me all this time only to ask such a question? They have begged me over and over again to stand for the town or the county, but I have always told them that if I must suffer for my sins I would prefer purgatory itself at once: I would rather be burnt than be bored! As for you, I really do believe you will enjoy serving on committees,

going in for supply, darting in to save a count-out, and all the rest of it. So—it is a settled matter?"

"Really—on my life, Chandos, I cannot thank you enough" Even on Trevenna's face there came something of a flush of shame, and into his voice something of the husky hesitation of conscience-moved restlessness: for one moment the contrast of this man's actions and his own, struck him with a force that left him without his usual weapons. Chandos saw in this nothing beyond the reaction of a sudden and pleasurable surprise; he laid his hand kindly on the other's shoulder.

"Thank me by showing them in the House what my friend can prove himself! And, Trevenna, look here: do not think that because you are returned through my influence you are for a moment expected to represent my opinions. The borough is a quiet, colourless, little place, that will ask you no questions provided you adequately attend to its sea-coast interests; you may do anything else that you like. I hear that you have lately been lecturing, or something, in the North,—that you have been expressing views totally different from those you hear in my set. Now understand, once for all, I wish you to enter public life *entirely* unshackled. Choose your party, or remain an independent member: act precisely as you deem most true and most wise. After living among us, I am not afraid you will join the Ultras in pulling our houses down over our heads and in parcelling our estates into building allotments; but, whatever you genuinely believe, let that be what you advocate in the House, as though neither I nor Clarencieux existed."

With these words he went out, to spare his presence to the man whom he had just assisted to the fruitage of his once hopeless ambition.

Trevenna stood still and silent, struck mute for the instant with the blaze of his rising fortunes, and moved for one fleeting second with a heavy sense of treacherous shame. "Damnation!" he said, in his teeth: "for five minutes I almost forgot to hate him!"

Half in shadow, half in sunlight, in the noontide of the day, sat the Queen of Lilies.

A cluster of tall copper beeches stood out before a deep dark screen of crag, and waved and tossed together in grand confusion, and wild as they had been in the days of the Druids, only broken here and there by the rush of some tumbling torrent. Under the beeches was a broken wishing-well, its stones covered with ivy, its brink overgrown with heaths and maiden-hair and countless violets. Here, some ten miles beyond Clarencieux, in this lonely forest-land of her brother-in-law's newly-taken shooting-place, Lady Valencia sat in solitude, with the falling of the waters only mingled with the thrill of a nightingale's evening note poured out on the hush of the noon. In her most sovereign moments she had never looked so lovely as now, in the complete negligence, abandonment, almost dejection, of her attitude. She leaned against the stone coping of

the well, one arm resting on it, so that her hand, half unconsciously, played now and then with the green coils of leaves and grasses falling in the water; her head drooped slightly; there was sadness, almost melancholy, in the musing shadow of her liquid eyes. A volume of "Lucrèce" lay at her feet; a water-spaniel waited near, wistfully watching for her notice. The melody of bird or river had no music on her ear: she was thinking very wearily.

Thus—she all insensible of his gaze—Chandos saw her.

He paused, checked his horse as he rode through a bridle-path hidden in foliage, wavered an instant, then flung the rein to his servant, bade him ride on, and went backward, through the entangled meshes of the leaves, towards the ruined wishing-well.

His step made no echo on the moss; unseen he noted the weariness of languor in the dreaming repose, the musing pain, that darkened the eyes that gazed down absently on the purple wealth of the violet buds. "Does she regret me?" he thought; and at sight of that living beauty which had haunted him through Eastern cities and Italian air, the old soft, wayward, unresisted passion which had so often ruled him, yet never reigned more utterly than it was near reigning now, woke in all its force. He thought neither of penalty nor of consequence, of wisdom nor of future; he thought alone of her.

The movement of his hand as he put aside the red gold of the copper-beech leaves and the light spring buds of the young ivy-coils caught her ear; she lifted her eyes, and met the eloquence of his. She rose, with something almost hurried and tremulous in the dignity of her serene grace; her face flushed, her glance had a light in it he had never seen there; sudden surprise changed the calm of her grand and delicate beauty to a new warmth and hesitation that lent a still fairer life. In that instant, as he saw her under the burnished gold of the arching sunlit leaves, he could not doubt but that she loved him.

"You have returned?" The words were low and unstudied, as though in the surprise of his presence there her proud tranquillity broke down.

"Ah! forgive me that I ever wandered away. Forgetfulness did not go with me."

He scarcely thought, he never measured, what he said; he thought only of her loveliness, there in the shadows of the spring-time leafage; and the loveliness of women had always done with him what it would. He bent nearer to her, looking down into her eyes with a gaze that made them droop, and made her heart beat with a swift, uncertain throb, a vague gleam of hope. "My love! my love!" he murmured, thinking no more of the cost and issue of his words than he had thought when he had murmured such against the warm cheek of some young Eastern odalisque, or gazing into the lustre of Southern eyes under the Spanish stars, or by the shores of Procida, "we must not part again!"

The music of his voice stole upon her ear, charming and lulling her into its own trance of passion; the deep warmth of a hot flush stole over all her beauty, intensifying every delicate hue, like the

warmth from the noon through the crimson leaves; and as he drew her into his embrace, with his kiss he bartered his peace, his honour, and his future; for it, in that hour of her power, he would have thought the world well lost. The violets blossoming, dew-laden, at their feet—flower of the poets, and crown of child-Protus' golden hair—were not more sweet than that first birth and utterance of love.

CHAPTER VI.

THE POEM AS WOMEN READ IT.

BEFORE a fire (for she fancied or liked to say she was chilly, in those late April days that were well-nigh as warm as summer) Lady Chesterton lay sulkily reclining in her little boudoir. She was very sullen, very grave, very moody. She was bitter as gall in her own soul. The distant cousin she hated, because he had inherited her father's title, had been left a fortune that would enable him to raise the Ivors peerage to its old glories, whilst her husband was so heavily in debt that the narrowest continental economy would not better him. This house with its shootings that had entailed so much expense, had served them no purpose. Lord Clydesmore was hopeless to attract again after his first repulse; other men were coy of her beautiful sister,—a Marquis's daughter, and portionless. She herself loved show, wealth, magnificence, all the exclusivism of greatness in its greatest; and she was literally poorer than one of the gamekeepers' wives out in the park yonder,—poorer, for the keeper's wife could accept her poverty, and the peeress had to go to court as a lady-in-waiting, and to rack her brains afterwards to stave off the milliner who sent her court-dresses.

"I wish I were one of those wretched women in the cottages in the woods!" she thought. "They have to bake, and to scrub, and to slap their dirty children, and to pinch and screw, and live on pork and potatoes; but they are better off than I: they have nothing to *keep up!*"

It was a bitter truth, and she felt its bitterness to the utmost, where she sat, curled in the velvets and silks and luxury, that those she envied would have so envied "my lady," could they have looked in her in her solitude. She turned her head slowly as the door opened, glanced up with half-closed eyes, then returned to the moody contemplation of the fire. She had been a very miserable companion, a very gloomy tyrant, to her sister during this winter, when they had been mewed in leafless woods for nothing, with no dinner-party nearer than fifteen miles, hearing of that "odious man Trevenna's" men-parties at Clarencieux, and hopeless of ever seeing its lost lord return. Nor had the month or so of the town-season much improved her temper, now that she was back again for the recess.

Lady Valencia came up in silence till she stood before the fire; her black laces swept round her over a white morning dress, and

there had caught across it, in unnoticed ornament, one of the long ivy-coils with leaves of darkest, buds of lightest green.

"What a draught you bring in with you!" shivered Lady Chesterton, peevishly. "Good gracious! you are dressed as if it were summer. Take care, pray; you brush Dragée's hair the wrong way!"

Moving her skirts from the little lion-dog, Lady Valencia stood silent still. Her sister looked up at her and wondered. The brilliance of the spring-tide seemed to have lingered on the Queen of Lilies; there was a new look upon her face.

"What has happened?" asked the peeress, sharply.

She looked down on the baroness with a certain haughty contempt. She owed her sister many a goading irritation, many a sneering taunt.

"Your sacrifice at this shooting-box has not been in vain," she said, calmly detaching the green ivy-spray from her dress.

Lady Chesterton started up in her chair, her black eyes all vivid animation.

"Valencia! you do not mean——"

"Yes," said the Lily Queen, serenely still; but she turned her head with the lofty supremacy of a victorious queen; a proud triumph flashed in the velvet depths of her eyes; every line of her form, every curve of her lips, expressed conquest; "yes, we have won. I shall be mistress of Clarencieux!"

Had Chandos been there in that moment, he would have seen it were better for him that he should lie in his grave than that she should be so.

CHAPTER VII.

IN THE ROSE-GARDENS.

CHANDOS, as it was, could scarcely have said that the same triumph remained with him.

For marriage he had an utter distaste,—of his liberty a surpassing love; the slightest bondage was unendurable to him; and the thought of what he had done on the spur of an irresistible beauty and a vainly-resisted love weighed on him curiously as he rode through the aisles of pines and over the vast undulating sward of the outlying lands, with the sound of the sea from the distance, and in the sunny air the winged dwellers of the beach, the delicate tern, the rare hen-harrier, the ring-plover, and the mallard, flying above the wild thyme and the still moor-pools. His life had not a shadow: why had he not left it as it was? He loved her,—he loved her with a great passion that, through her beauty, swayed him like a reed; and yet a strange weariness, a strange depression, came upon him as he swept over the wild wolds. He felt as though he had surrendered up his future into bondage.

As he turned his horse into the home-woods, leaving the purple

moorlands that were the sea-shore appanage of Clarencieux at a cross-road, one of his own hunters was spurred after him. Trevenna came up with him.

"How you do ride!" cried Trevenna, himself a good but cautious horseman, not caring very much for the saddle. "You will break your neck, surely, some day. How you took that gate! By the way, if you were to do such a thing, who is your heir? There is no other Chandos."

"The estates would go to the Castlemaine family: I have no nearer relatives," answered Chandos, a little wearily. Now, of all other times, he could have wished the incessant chatter of his Chicot far away.

"Ah, but you'll marry some time or other, of course."

Chandos gave a gesture of impatience: the word grated terribly on his ear. Trevenna glanced at him, and knew what he wanted. Through his reconnoitrer-glass he had seen the wishing-well, and the two who had stood beneath the copper beeches, and he wished to learn how far the affair had gone. The impatient gesture told him. He had studied every impulse and minutest trait of Chandos' character, till he could gauge his feeling and his meaning to the slightest shade.

"The ladies were upbraiding you loudly for your desertion when I left the house. They had sauntered down out of their rooms to ride and drive, and were indignant not to have their host *en proie*," he went on, carelessly; he knew his companion too well to press the other subject. "As for me, I have been meditating on my coming greatness. Really, have you thought well of it, Chandos? Your friends will say you have put an adventurer in the House."

"They will not say so to me; and if they do to you, you can give them more than they send. Besides, you will have good company: did not they say so of Canning?"

"Then you are really resolved on lifting me to St. Stephen's?"

"Assuredly."

"Upon my word, monseigneur, you make one think of Timon's

> I could deal kingdoms to my friends,
> And ne'er be weary!"

"Timon! you choose me an ominous parallel. Would you all be 'feast-won, fast-lost'?"

"The deuce! I dare say we should."

The answer was rough, but it was true as far as it went. There were times when Trevenna could not quite help being truthful. Lying invariably will become as weary work, sometimes, as telling truth becomes to most people; and there was a cynical candour in the fellow not always to be broken into training.

"I would trust you sooner not to be, Trevenna, for the frankness of that admission," said Chandos, right in his deduction, even if he should be wrong in this present instance. "Look at that glimpse of sea through the pines; how wonderful in colour!"

The deep blue of the sea-line glistened to violet beyond the dark-green boughs and the russet shafts of the pine-stems. The

woods of the deer-forest stretched in rolling masses upward and inland; and beyond, tinged with the brightest light, stood the magnificent pile of the castle. Trevenna looked.

"Yes, very pretty."

"Good Heavens! you speak as if it were the transformation-scene of a ballet!"

"I like a ballet a good deal better. Clouds of transparent skirts are better than clouds of transparent mists. You are very fond of this place, Ernest!"

"It were odd if I were not. I can fancy how it was deadlier to the last Marquis than to sever from friend or mistress, when he had to look his last on Clarencieux."

Trevenna smiled, and flicked his horse thoughtfully between the ears, as they rode on in silence.

> "Thou givest so long, Timon, I fear me
> Thou wilt give thyself away in paper, shortly,"

ran the thread of his musings.

Trevenna's momentary pang of conscience in the morning had been particularly short-lived. It had died with the next look upward to the face of the last Marquis.

At that moment, entering on the clearer spaces of the Home Park, where four avenues of gigantic limes crossed and met each other, one of the most singular beauties of Clarencieux, they encountered another riding-party escorting a little pony-carriage drawn by four perfect piebalds, and containing Madame de la Vivarol and a Russian princess. Among the escort were the Royal Duc de Neuilly, and another Duc, not royal, but an European notoriety all the same,—Philippe François, Duc d'Orvâle. Philippe d'Orvâle was a character,—Europe was given to saying, too, a very bad character.

Chief of one of the great feudal races of France, now growing fewer and fewer with every generation, he was, so to speak, born in the purples, and had lived in them up to the time when he was now some fifty years of age. Exceedingly handsome, he still preserved his *débonnaire* graces. Excessively talented, he could on occasion outwit a Metternich, a Talleyrand, or a Palmerston. Extremely popular, he was the prince of bon-vivants. With all this, Philippe d'Orvâle had achieved a reputation too closely allied to that of his namesake of D'Orléans not to be considered a thorough-going reprobate, and to care infinitely less for succeeding in the field of state-affairs and political triumphs than for succeeding in dancing a new Spanish cachucha, in brewing a new liqueur-punch at his *soupers à huis clos*, in dazzling Paris with some mad freak of exuberant nonsense, and in leading the Demi-Monde in all its wildest extravagances. He had a good deal in him of the madcap mixture that was in the character of the Emperor Maximilian, and, like him, scouted courts, titles, states, and dignities for some reckless piece of devil-may-care. He might have been anything he chose; but he, duke and peer of France, decorated with half the orders of Europe, descendant of nobles who

had been cousins of Valois and nephews of Bourbon and Medici, did not choose to be anything except the chief of the Free Lances and the sovereign patron of singers and ballet-dancers.

Certes, he enjoyed himself, and looked on at his gay world unsated out of his careless eyes; but his family thought him mad, and had, indeed, tried to restrain him from the control of his vast properties, till Duc Philippe, suddenly taking it into his head to show them he was sane, went to Vienna, and conducted a delicate *imbroglio* so matchlessly for France that it was impossible to support the charge any longer, though, having so vindicated his sanity, he returned directly to his own courses, and was found at breakfast next day with three actresses from the Variétés, an inimitable buffo-singer from the Café Alcazar, a posture-dancer off the pavement of the Palais Royal, in whom he declared he had discovered a relative, and a Pifferaro's monkey seated solemnly in state in one of the velvet chairs, munching truffles and praslins, amidst the chorus of Rossini's *Papatacci*, sung by the whole party and led by D'Orvâle himself.

A man who will set down a Barbary ape at his table, Europe, of course, will pronounce out of his senses: yet a more finished gentleman than Duc Philippe never bowed before a throne; and while Europe in a mass pronounced him the most hideous amalgamation of vices, two or three who knew him well, among whom was Chandos, steadily upheld that there was not an ounce of real evil in this bearded *bon enfant*.

John Trevenna, as far as dissipation went, was a perfectly irreproachable character, and had not really a vice that could be put down at his score; Philippe d'Orvâle was a very reproachable one, and had, beyond doubt, a good many; yet perhaps both Guido Lulli and Beau Sire were in the right when they shrank from the keen blue eyes of the one, and came up without fear, sure of a kindly word, under the sunny gaze of the other.

The next night there were, as commonly when the house was filled, theatricals at Clarencieux. The same Paris troupe which had gone to Constantinople were down here for the recess, reinforced by a new actress of the most enchanting talents, and by John Trevenna, who had the most inimitable powers of mimicry ever seen on a stage, and who now played in the first vaudeville, as an Englishman on his initiatory trip to Paris, till even the fastidious and sated audience he played for were in uncontrollable laughter, and even the ladies, his very worst foes, were of opinion that a person who could amuse them so well, certainly deserved to go into Parliament, though he did come nobody knew whence, and had lodgings in town nobody knew where.

Trevenna showed his wisdom in playing the part of a Charles Mathews to this little bijou theatre, since by it he won over the toleration of his most inveterate and most inexorable foes.

The only guests, besides the people staying in the castle, were the Chestertons and Lady Valencia. A prouder moment even the Lily Queen had never wished for or dreamt of than when she first passed the threshold of Clarencieux into the mighty hall where

Evelyn Chandos had marshalled his cavaliers, and knew that she was the future mistress of that royal place; than when she was met upon the great staircase as the Chandos only met their sovereigns, and knew that she was the betrothed wife of this brilliant darling of courts, this magnificent leader of fashion, whom the world had said no woman would ever so woo and so win.

Perhaps, indeed, as they passed from the reception-rooms to the dining-hall, and from the drawing-rooms again to the theatre, through the lofty corridors ceiled with cedar and hung with Renaissance decorations on which the first artists of Italy had of late years been employed, her glance too often wandered to the mere art-skill and costliness with which every yard of Clarencieux was filled,—to the priceless pictures, to the delicate statues, to the gold and the ivory, the malachite and the jasper, the porphyry and the marble, the collections of a princely wealth and of a race eight centuries old. Perhaps she looked too much at these, the mere possessions of accident, the mere symbols of power; perhaps the higher, deeper, softer, treasures of the future she had won escaped her, and were less dear to her than these insignia of her lover's rank, her lover's splendour: perhaps. She had been in the bitter school of titled poverty; from her birth upwards she had been so proud, and yet so penniless.

As they sat at dinner in the banqueting-hall, hung with scarlet and gold, with its ceiling arched above the sixteen Corinthian pillars of porphyry given by La Grande Catherine to a Chandos who had been ambassador at her court, the Queen of Lilies, haughty as an empress, delicate as a young deer, pure and stately as the flower of her emblem though she was, appraised the grandeur of Clarencieux well-nigh with as critical a survey as Ignatius Mathias could have done, and looked less upward to where her lover sat, than opposite to where, above the sculptured marble of the mighty hearth, above the crossed standards of Evelyn Chandos and the last Marquis, of Edgehill and of Preston, there rested in a niche, all wrought in ivory and silver in a curious Florentine carving, the last coronet that had ever been worn by a Chandos,—the attaindered coronet of Clarencieux.

"Amazingly like the last Marquis he looks to-night, by Jove!" thought Trevenna, standing behind the curtain of the pretty stage before it drew up for the vaudeville, and surveying through a chink the slope of the theatre filled with arm-chairs, without any partition into boxes, and all glittering with arabesques and gilding and chandeliers, where in the centre Chandos stood leaning over Lady Valencia's chair. "Well, there is a Tower Hill waiting for him too! Only my lord, with his d—d proud smile, said, 'All's lost,—*except* honour!' I guess his descendant will say, 'All's lost, —*even* honour!" We must not strike till this election matter's over. That put me out of my calculations; and it's too good to lose. Only a little while longer, though, shall I play the fool to please his patricians, and monseigneur stand there owner of Clarencieux. *Après*——"

The bell rang a little chime; the curtain, exquisitely painted with a view of Pæstum, drew up. Trevenna sauntered forward to greet the Parisienne actress, with a flow of inimitable nonsense, and an effervescence of animal spirits so mirthful and contagious that the most *blasé* of his audience were laughed into an irresistible good humour; and had his election depended on their votes, he would have been safe into his borough that instant. There were only two who, while they laughed, would have withheld their suffrage; they were the Duke of Castlemaine and Philippe Duc d'Orvàle,—the two who, despite the presence of women whose fair eyes had vowed him such soft fidelity, were the two in Clarencieux that night who loved Chandos the best.

Some faint perception that the tenderness borne him by the one he last wooed was not that with which he, with the fervour of an impassioned nature beneath his carelessness, had loved and been loved under Southern and Asiatic suns, stirred in him even that night. He had been hurried by her beauty into the utterance of a long-resisted passion; but of her heart, of her nature, of her thoughts, he knew nothing. He loved her as poets love, seeing her through the glories of his own imaginings; but he knew no more whether in truth she answered them than he knew what he had done for his own future when he had drawn her into its life with that caress which left him bound to her.

He had been spoiled by a world that had so long adored him; he had been used to the utmost gratification of every fancy, of every wish; he had been intensely loved by women, used to burning words, to lavish tenderness. In her there was some want that he vaguely missed, some coldness scarcely felt, yet ever there, which now in the first moment of his surrender to her passed over him with a chill. He knew that he had done a fatal thing; and the thought haunted him even in the gaieties of Clarencieux,—even when for an instant he was alone with her, as he drew her from the ball-room into the conservatories, aisles of tropical blossom and vegetation glowing with the deep bronze of South American leaves and the scarlet of Oriental fruits and flowers, the foliage of Mexico and the flora of Persia.

"Ah, my Queen of Lilies!" he murmured, passionately, "you are fair as the flower they call you after; but are you as cold? You have not yet learnt what love really is: look into my eyes and read it there!"

She drew herself softly from his embrace, startled and flushed by the warmth of his words, by the ardour of a temperament beside which her own was as ice to the sirocco, as the moon to the sun.

"Where is it that I fail?" she whispered; "how would you have me love you?"

"How! My fairest, words are but cold interpreters; if you knew, you would not ask the question. How? Speech cannot teach that lore. I would be loved as I love,—so only!"

"Ernest, pardon me," said the Duke of Castlemaine, as late in that dawn he met his grandson, both on their way to the smoking-room; "but your attentions were extraordinarily marked to Lady

Valencia St. Albans to-night,—almost too much so, since there are princesses of the French and Russian blood in your house. If I were not sure——"

"Dear Duke, be sure of nothing."

His Grace paused, wheeled round, and stared at him.

"Chandos! you cannot mean——"

"Yes; I mean what you are thinking of. I have said more than I can unsay. Let us drop the subject."

An oath of the hot Regency days of his early manhood broke from under the white cavalry moustaches of the old nobleman, as he stood and gazed at his favourite descendant in the silvery light from the candelabra above their heads in the corridor. He had no need to ask more questions; he understood well enough, and the comprehension cut him to the heart.

"Good God, Ernest!" and there was an accent of genuine grief, as well as of amaze. "And you might have wedded royal women,—Louise d'Albe, Marie of August, the Princess d'Orvieto! you might have claimed the hand of any one of them! but you declared that you hated marriage."

"I declared only the truth. Marriage I abhor; but her—I love."

The Duke ground his still strong handsome teeth with a fierce impatience; he knew that the Chandos of Clarencieux—libertines perhaps, epicureans always—had never let any earthly wisdom or law or plea stand between them and the follies of their hearts or passions.

"I knew she would do it, if she had the chance," he muttered. "To run after you here, to come into the country the instant you returned from Paris,—indelicate, indecent!"

Chandos stretched out his hand.

"Hush, sir: *I* cannot hear such accusations. It was not her doing that she came; she has told me that she was strongly averse to it, the more averse because, as I may now confess for her, she loved me."

The Duke swept his hand over his snowy moustaches with a scornful, wrathful gesture.

"Need she have come, then? The daughter of Ivors can scarce be so utterly destitute of friends. She intrigues for you as markedly as any Flora de l'Orme, though in a different fashion."

Chandos turned to him, grave almost to weariness for the moment, but gentle as of old.

"My dear Duke, you know that I would not have a difference with *you* for the worth of Clarencieux; but you must not use such words in my presence of one whom you will hereafter receive as —my wife."

He paused before the last two syllables; he could not utter them without some pain, without some distrust. His Grace suppressed a deadlier oath; he loved Chandos with more fondness than he would have cared to confess, and he had, besides, the most superb instincts of thorough-bred courtesy.

"I beg your pardon," he said, with a bend of his stately head.

"I have, of course, no right to comment on your choice or on your actions; but all I would ask you is, what will she recompence you for all you must forfeit for her?"

Chandos gave a half-impatient sigh, not so low but that it caught his grandfather's ear.

"It is useless speaking. It is not that I doubt your wisdom, or dispute your right of counsel; but what is done is done: let us leave a fruitless subject."

He moved on, and threw open the door of the smoking-room. The Duke loved him too well to say more, but he turned back abruptly, bade him good-night, and went to his own apartment. Well as the gallant old man enjoyed the society of a younger generation, and welcome as he was to it by right of his grand intellect, his unquenched spirits, and his high renown, he had not the heart for it now; he felt, vaguely and bitterly, that the cloudless sunshine of fortune would soon or late desert the last Chandos left to Clarencieux.

Chandos himself that night smoked his favourite rose-water *narghilé* in the smoking-room, then sat down with Philippe d'Orvâle to *écarté*, closely contested, costly, and washed, now and then, with iced sherbet. They played while everybody else slept; then, as d'Orvâle went to bed, Chandos instead let himself out by a side door that opened into the rose-gardens, and walked alone into the sunny, silent morning, with no other companion than Beau Sire.

With the temper of a voluptuary and the habits of a man of the world, there was blent in him as strong a love of nature and of all the beauty of forest and moorland, of the change of the seasons, and of the floating glories of the clouds, as the purest of the Lakists ever felt. In truth, he was many men in one, and to the apparent inconsistency it produced in his character were due both the versatility of his talents and the scope of his sympathies. His penetration was often at fault; he thought too well of men, and judged them too carelessly; but his sympathies were invariably catholic and true; he understood what others felt with an unerring surety of perception,—a quality that invariably begets attachment, a quality that, in its highest development, produces genius.

He walked far, spending two hours in the forest and on the shore. The flight of a flock of sea-swallows, the toss of the surf on the yellow sands, the rolling-in of the great curled waves, the morning life of the woodlands, the nest-song of the thrushes, the poise of a blue-warbler above a river-plant, the circling sweep of an osprey in the air, all had their charm to him; not one of the sights and sounds of the spring-day was indifferent to him or unnoted by him. He loved to lay high prices on the cards in the excitement of a gaming-room, and he loved to lead the wit and wildness of a sparkling, reckless Paris night; but none the less did he love to stand and look over the gray, calm expanse of a limitless sea, none the less did he love to listen to the laugh of a west wind through the endless aisles of a forest.

He strolled till past noon through his lands with the retriever

alone beside him, then he re-entered the gardens by the same gate by which he had left them. In them he met, alone also, La Vivarol. He would very willingly have avoided the meeting. He knew how inexorable a tyrant the fair countess had been: it was with difficulty that he had loosened her fetters at all, and the escape he had made had, as he was well aware, never been pardoned him. Of a scene, of anything approaching reproaches, recrimination, or a quarrel, Chandos had more than the common horror; it was one of the frailties of his nature to do any thing on the face of the earth to avoid a "*mauvais quart d'heure;*" and now his conscience told him that he could scarcely complain if he had to endure one, even if madame were unaware of the lengths to which her rival's triumph extended. He advanced, therefore, with a misgiving.

"Ah, madame! good-morning. It is very rarely you honour the outer world so early."

The Countess laughed as silvery a peal as that rung by her toy-dog's little bells.

"No, indeed. The dawn, and the dew, and all the rest of it are charming in eclogues and pastorals, but in real life they are—a little damp! but to-day I did not sleep very well; my novel was dull, and the gardens looked tempting."

"Those who are so much the gainers by it will not quarrel with any caprice that brings them to you earlier."

La Vivarol laughed again,—a little contemptuously, letting an echo of sadness steal into it. This brightest Venus Victrix was very chary of her sighs, but on very rare occasions she could be mournful with an effect no other ever approached.

"My favourite rose-gardens," she said, glancing round them. "Their summer beauty is not yet come, though it is very near. *I* shall never see it."

"Madame! what can make you utter so cruel a prediction for Clarencieux?"

She let her long eyes, dazzling as a falcon's, rest on him, humid with a mist that he could almost have sworn was of tears.

"*Chut, mon ami!* A new queen will soon reign at Clarencieux, they say; can you pretend that I should be welcome then?"

There was a repressed melancholy in the tone more touching than spoken reproach. Like Trevenna, she had long studied and traced his most facile and most accessible weakness. She knew he could never be moved by recrimination; she knew he could be wounded in an instant by tenderness. He was silent a moment, startled and pained; he scarce could tell how to soothe away this bitterness to her.

"Believe me," he said, a little hurriedly, "whatever changes Clarencieux sees, you will ever be welcomed to it by me."

"And do you think that with these 'changes' I would come to it?" She spoke with a proud rebuke, a melancholy challenge, turning her eyes full on his. Not a woman living knew so well how to place a man in a wrong position, and close all gates of escape upon him, as Héloïse de la Vivarol. Chandos felt inconstant and cruel,—felt as she chose that he should feel.

"However that be," she murmured, dreamily, placing him yet further and further at his disadvantage, as only a woman's tact can do, "*I* wish you every joy, Ernest, that earth can bring. Ernest! I may call you that still once more; the name will be for new lips in the future."

The tears shone, dimming her brilliant eyes; a touching and resigned reproach was in her tone; sadness was tenfold more intense, coming for once in its rarity upon the dazzling, victorious face of the sovereign conqueror. Chandos felt guilty, felt repentant, felt everything that she meant he should feel. His wiser judgment might have known that this was but the perfection of acting; but she did not let his judgment come a second into play; she moved him at once by his heart and by his sympathies. He took her hand, and stooped towards her.

"Héloïse, forgive me. I deeply regret—I did not know—at least, if ever——"

He was about, despite all his consummate tact and his knowledge of the world and of its women, to do so rash a thing as to apologise to her for having deserted his allegiance! She stopped him softly.

"Say no more; the past is past. No one you have ever known will wish you happiness as I shall wish it. We are friends now, and ever will be. Another love usurps you: so be it. To me, at least, is left your friendship still. It is not too much to ask, Ernest?"

"Too much! It is yours for ever."

He spoke warmly, contrite, and surprised that she had loved him so well. She had never looked more lovely than in this sudden descent from her haughty and contemptuous gaiety of sovereign triumph to this mournful and wistful resignation. "I never thought that she had loved me *so*," he mused, surprised and moved, when he had left her. She had led him by his feelings, and he had neither the keenness nor the suspicion in him to doubt that she betrayed him. To Chandos it was far easier to think that he had done a woman of the world wrong by thinking her too heartless, than to credit that she wronged him by masking a bitter passion that she felt and assuming a gentle passion she did not feel. It was true, she loved him,—in her reading of the word; but it was in such a reading that the night before, seeing her English rival's power, she had set her delicate teeth together, and sworn, in her heart,—

"I will have my vengeance! if it be twenty years hence, I will have my vengeance!"

And before twenty years she had it.

CHAPTER VIII.

THE WATCHER FOR THE FALL OF ILION.

"They tell me the Premier has pressed on you again the restoration of your title?"

The Queen of Lilies spoke, standing under those very palms, in her sister's town residence, under which she had stood when she had first spoken the name of Chandos.

"Yes, my dearest, he has done so."

"And you accept?"

"No; I decline."

"Decline! And why?"

"Why? For many matters. One, that what was robbed from us by the crown I will not take from the crown as a re-creation. The last Marquis laid his life down to preserve his honour. Athens would have given him a statue in her Altis; England, characteristically, gave him a block on Tower Hill. We have never condoned his judicial murder."

"Refuse the marquisate to gratify the manes of a beheaded ancestor! What quixotism!"

Chandos looked as he felt,—annoyed; he was used to be deferred to, and the women he had loved had been playfully gentle even in their most imperious tyrannies. Besides, a deeper vexation smote him; this anxiety for his rank showed that his rank usurped her thoughts.

"Quixotism it may be; such as it is, it will always govern me; and I should have hoped one who loved me would strive to understand my feelings, as I would strive to understand hers."

"But why? tell me why. Attaindered titles have been restored before now. Others have thought it very right."

"What others may do has never been my guide."

"I know! But—forgive me—I cannot see your motive."

"'Forgive' is no word between us, my worshipped one. But to tell you my motives I should have to tell you a long story. Suffice it, nothing—not even your prayer—would ever induce me to be made Lord Clarencieux."

"A story? Oh, you must tell it me!"

"Why, my dearest? We have a story of our own far sweeter than any chronicle."

"No, no. You have excited me now; you must gratify my curiosity."

She spoke caressingly, but in her heart were a keen irritation and mortification. She had set all the longing of her ambitious life upon his marquisate. The word of a woman is command to the man who loves her; he smiled, looking down upon her, and drawing her nearer in his embrace.

"You know the life and the death of the last lord?—it is a matter of history. When he joined Charles Edward at Preston, he was the most brilliant man of his time, a wit, a soldier, a poet, a *bel esprit*, the friend of Philippe d'Orléans and Richelieu, the

courtliest noble of his age. He had loved many; but he loved latest, and above all, a Duke's daughter, his betrothed wife. When he was flung into the Tower they offered him not only life, but highest distinctions, if he would betray a state secret known to be in his possession. You are aware that he refused, in words which sent the Whig nobles who came to tempt him out of his presence like lashed hounds. Yet existence was unutterably dear to him. What think you the woman who loved him did?—she, a court-beauty, whom hundreds urged to forgetfulness and infidelity. All she craved from the throne was permission to go to him in his captivity, being 'prouder,' as her letters phrase it, 'to share his doom than to be one with the pomp and pride of emperors.' It was granted, and she was wedded to him one evening in the Beauchamp Tower. She lived with him there four months, while his trial languished on. They feared to murder him, for the Chandos were very powerful then; yet they thirsted like wolves for the great chief's blood. His name was like a clarion to all the gentlemen of the South. Through all those months she never left him for one hour, nor did one word ever escape her lips to urge him to purchase life at loss of honour. They took him from her side to the scaffold, one fair spring morning, to die, with a smile upon his lips, and those brief words, 'Tout est perdu, fors l'honneur!' They say that from the radiance of scarcely twenty years she changed to the blanched and decrepitude of extreme age in that hour of agony when the axe fell upon the neck her arms had wreathed in his last sleep. The son, to whom she gave birth afterwards, grew up to manhood, the estates saved for him by others' intercession,—never by her own. She made him swear never to accept the restoration of his father's title, since it would have been to give condonation to his father's murderers. He kept his oath inviolate; and it has been passed on from generation to generation. Now you understand why I will not accept the gift of my attaindered peerage."

The story had always had a strong and touching charm for women. Even Héloïse de la Vivarol, most careless, most heartless of young coquettes, had listened to it, looking at the Knellet portrait, with tears that started genuine and true into her falcon eyes; and even her mother, the Princess Lucille, that weary, hardened, war-worn, continental Bohemian of the Blood, had heard it in a grave, awed silence, and had turned slowly away: "C'est bien beau!—cet amour qui est plus fort que la mort. Je ne le comprends pas; mais c'est beau!"

Now the chastely-trained English beauty, in the purity and freshness of her youth, was less moved by it, understood it less, than the calumny-proof and evilly-accused Frenchwoman.

She listened, she smiled, she thanked him; but the history did not reach her heart. She felt, moreover, that after what he had now said it would be as useless to urge him to the acceptance of the Clarencieux peerage as to urge on him some actual dishonour; and all the longing of her soul had been set upon that proud marquisate.

Meanwhile there was not a single person of Chandos' acquaintance to whom the prospect of his marriage was not bitterly unwelcome,—except, indeed, Trevenna, who seemed thoroughly content with it; at which other men wondered, knowing how much benefit accrued to him from the careless and gay extravagance of his friend's unwedded life. "But then," they remarked, "Trevenna's always such a good-natured fellow!"

He had thoroughly earned this character. Did any man want anything, from a cigar to a hunting-mount, from a seat down to Epsom to an invitation for the moors, Trevenna would get it for him with the most obliging good nature,—so obliging, that men never knew or noticed that the cigars were Chandos', that the mounts were out of his stud, that the drag came out of his stable-yard, and that the Highland shootings were over his heather and forest. Good nature Trevenna held a very safe and excellent reputation. His talents and his shrewdness secured him from ever incurring that contempt, born of familiarity, which good nature is apt to beget; and it was a reputation, as he considered, that kept a clever man "dark," and secured him from every imputation of being "dangerous" or ambitious, better than any thing. No one ever suspects an embryo Drusus or Catiline, a lurking Gladstone or Bismarck, in the man of whom everybody says, "Most obliging fellow in the world; always do you a turn; uncommonly good-natured!"

When the blue-eyed, golden-haired Proconsul cracked his jests with Roscius, and lent his thousands of sesterces in reckless liberality, and offered his Cuman villa to his boon-comrades, and played the witty fool, with roses on his bright locks, through the hot nights of roystering, devil-may-care, dead-drunk Rome, who feared or foresaw in the boon-companion the dread conqueror of Aphrodite's Temple, the great dictator of the Optimates, the iron-handed Retribution of the Marians?

"What ever possessed you to put that fellow into Parliament, Ernest?" asked the Duke of Castlemaine, in the window of White's, a fortnight after the recess, flinging down the paper, in which a quiet paragraph announced the retirement of Sir Jasper Lyle and the unopposed nomination and election in his stead of the nominee of Clarencieux, John Trevenna, now M.P.

Chandos raised his eyebrows a little.

"I put him in because he was fitted for it not a common reason for elections, I admit."

The Duke gave a low growl in his white beard. "You think life is to be dealt with by *bon mots* and epigrams. I can't say the Lower House has much to thank you for in furnishing it with an adventurer!"

"It has much to thank me for in giving it a talker who can be logical without being long-winded, and sparkling without being shallow,—though possibly it won't see the obligation It reverses the prosy, and venerates the ponderous."

"And if you had a little of its tastes you would gain in safety

what you would lose in brilliance. You set too much store on mere talent, Chandos."

"I err in an opposite extreme to most of my countrymen, then, Duke."

"*Can* you answer one without a repartee?" muttered his Grace, grandly wrathful at an election from which he had done his best to dissuade his favourite. Prevent it he could not; he had no local influence in his grandson's county, and the little sea-coast borough within twenty miles of Clarencieux had almost as feudal an attachment to the mere name of Chandos as his peasantry and tenantry on the estates. The days of the last Marquis were not so far back but that living men could remember their grandsires relating the southern rallying round his standard; and the great fame of the late minister was a thing beloved and honoured through the whole of that sea-board as a thing of personal and imperishable renown.

"To put an adventurer like that fellow in the House!" muttered the Duke, fiercely recurring to a pinch of his fragrant *étrenne*. "I confess, I am astonished at you, Ernest."

"I would never have believed it," chorused his son, the Marquis of Deloraine.

"I did not believe it," echoed the Earl of Pontifex. "When I saw the paragraph in the paper, I set it down at once as a *canard*."

"Preposterous!" murmured a noble lord, who held the Foreign portfolio, from behind his morning paper.

"The ruin of the Constitution," sighed a colleague.

Chandos listened a little impatiently for his usual temper, and shrugged his shoulders ever so slightly.

"I am very sorry if the matter disturb you, but really I fail to see the occasion. I confess, it seems to me less damaging to put a man into the Lower House who has every promise for the vocation, except money, than to admit so many, as is now the custom, because money is the only recommendation they possess!"

With which concise retort on his and Trevenna's censors, Chandos absorbed himself in a new novel. The Duke, who might blame one whom he loved more dearly than any other of his kith and kin himself, but would never endure to hear him blamed elsewhere, laughed, and turned to the Foreign Secretary.

"Tell your rising men to look to their laurels, Pendragon: this fellow, now he *is* in, will cut some work out for them. 'Eh, sirrah, and ye're na quiet, I'll send ye to the five hundred kings in the Lower House: I'se warrant they'll tame ye,' said James the First to his restive charger. I don't think there will ever have been one of the 'five hundred kings' more likely to reign paramount, some way or other, than this very outsider, John Trevenna."

His Grace was a world-wise Nestor of all councils and battle-grounds, and, despite his aristocratic prejudices, judged the audacious outsider correctly.

The election had been conducted very quietly; there had not been the slightest attempt at even a threatened opposition; as Trevenna said himself, he "took a walk over."

Chandos was the idol of the whole country-side, and, for the sake of his great father's memory, no wish of his would have been opposed in his county. He proposed the new member in a few words, which sent a thrill through all his elder auditors; for the voice was the same clear, rich, irresistible voice—essentially the voice of the orator—which they had used to hear as Philip Chandos'. They had often wished and besought him to represent them in person; but he knew his own character better than they knew it, and had invariably declined. Without any murmur they took the candidate he proposed to them. The only persons who could have opposed the Clarencieux nominee, on the score of the Conservative creed so long held by the Clarencieux house, namely, the few people in the borough who loved change or studied politics enough to be Whig (and they were very few), Travenna himself had conciliated. That part of his canvassing he had done alone, unknown indeed to Chandos; and it was a study in itself, the masterly manner in which, abstaining from any avowal of Darshampton politics, such as would have startled out of their wits the old Tory burghers, whose only creed was the creed professed at Clarencieux, he still managed to dine his few Whig allies, to chat with them in inn-bars, to smoke with them cheerily in their back parlours or their sombre "best rooms," to win them all over to a man, and to leave them with the profound conviction that he only coalesced with their opponents in order that he might ultimately advance and support their own opinions. Travenna was a capital posture-dancer in social life, and here achieved the proverbially dangerous feat of sitting on two stools, with triumphant address and security.

Still, not here by his own tact, but by Chandos' assistance and friendship alone, did he accomplish the commencing ambition of his life, to pass unchallenged the door-keeper of St. Stephen's, and take his place upon the benches with the "five hundred kings."

Trevenna was in no sense an impressible man, and assuredly not an imaginative one; he would have strolled through the Birs Nimrud or the broken columns of Jupiter Ammon, with the sun full on the glories of the ruined temples, and would have cracked a ginger-beer bottle and wished for a *Punch;* he would have stood in St. Peter's in the gloom of the Crucifixion-day, while the "Miserere" wailed through the hush and the twilight, and would have amused himself like a schoolboy with letting off a bunch of crackers undetected, to bang and sputter on the solemn silence; he was essentially a "realist," to use the jargon of the schools, and a very jovial realist too. Yet even he, little given to being touched or impressed as he was, felt a certain proud thrill run through him, a certain hushed earnestness fall for a moment on him, as he first walked down to the House and took his place in the assembly that John Eliot suffered for, and every tyranny since has feared.

As he seated himself in the Commons, men noted that he was unusually quiet; some thought that this town-gossip, this dinner-wit, this idler of the Park and clubs, was conscious of being out of his element, and felt his own superficial cleverness useless and frivolous in their great congress; one or two thought, noting the

clear keenness of the eye, the meaning of the well-built brow, and the bright indomptable firmness of the lips, that he might be rather, on the contrary, measuring and maturing his strength against the future; and these were the deeper, surer-sighted of his observers.

So, quietly and unostentatiously, with good taste, as even those who begrudged him the elevation were constrained to admit, not altering his manner nor his mood because he had gained this social status, giving men no touch, as yet, of his quality and his power, training himself wisely, sedulously, and well, and caring little to be noted at present for any thing beyond his punctual and steady attendance at the House, Trevenna entered on his parliamentary career.

At the same time with his own, a very different ambition and aspiration were forwarded and fructified by Chandos.

The opera *Ariadne in Naxos* was completed, and after Easter, through his influence, and chiefly, indeed, at his expense, was to be produced with every magnificence in the presentation, and every assistance in the artists, that could be procured at any cost. On it hung the very life and soul of the musician Lulli. The idealic ambition of the French cripple was as intense in its absorption of him as Trevenna's realistic ambitions were of him; each was literally and equally governed by ambition. the difference was that one worshipped Art, the other only coveted Success. Lulli would have expired in rapture if, perishing in want and misery, he could have known that the world would treasure his works; Trevenna would not have given a rush for a fame that should have excelled Cæsar's, Aristides', or St. Paul's, if he had not dined well and drunk well while he lived.

Dreaming in his solitary room, the visionary, whose infirmities shut him out from every joy and hope that filled the lives of his fellow-men, had created things as glorious as ever issued from the thoughts of Mozart or of Meyerbeer. In self-reliance most helpless, among men weak as an ailing child, so ignorant of all worldly ways and wisdom that an infant of six years might have laughed him to scorn, Lulli in his own domain was a king, and from the twilight of the aching brain, which looked with so touching a pathos, with so bewildered a pain, out of the dreamy depths of his sad eyes, music had risen in its grandest incarnations, poems of eternal meaning had been garnered, beauty that would haunt a listening world and stir it from its sloth into a pang of some sublimer thought than daily toil for greed and gain, had been born in supreme perfection.

When will men learn to know that the power of genius, and the human shell in which it chances to be harboured, are as distinct as is the diamond from the quartz-bed in which they find it?

The *Ariadne* was the crown of Lulli's life; it was the first-born of his brain, the darling of his thoughts, the fruit of many a long summer day and winter night, given in untiring love to the work of its creation. By it the world was to decide whether this cripple's dream of fame was vain as "the desire of the moth for the star,"

or whether, when his existence had passed away from the patience and the pain of its daily being, the legacy he left would be upon the lips and in the hearts of thousands, with the legacies of the great masters.

The day approached at last for the trial,—scarcely three weeks since Chandos had bartered all the liberty of his future in one caress among the spring-wealth of the violets. Was it well lost? He thrust the question from him unanswered, and gave himself up to the sway of his new passion unresisting. He had never known sorrow; how could he well know fear? Now and then a passionate regret seized him for the fatal opportunity which had led him away to resign his fate and future to her; but—he loved; he had never been overtaken by calamity; he was of a nature on which presentiment could assume no hold; he flung the fear off him, and forgot it, stooping to take the soft touch of her lips.

"I suppose before long, Trevenna, you will renounce *my* exchequer-chancellorship and begin to prepare yourself for the nation's?" laughed Chandos, the evening before that on which the *Ariadne in Naxos* was to be presented. "I cannot hope to keep you as my financier now that you have parliamentary affairs in earnest to work at: still, you must give me notice when you mean to resign. The vacancy will be hard to fill."

Trevenna laughed also.

"I confess, I pity my successor, as far as finances go: though it is a very good office for perquisites, it is something tremendous for expenditure. By the way, have you any idea what you *do* spend, Chandos?"

Chandos carelessly shook together the diamonds on a fancy-dress as he made his toilette for a fancy-ball at the Princess Anna Miraflora's.

"An idea of what I spend? No. I always tell you, knowing the price of things spoils them."

"But not knowing the price of them may chance to spoil *you*."

"I am spoilt. I don't deny it; but then it's very pleasant."

"Very, no doubt. I never tried it. But in sober seriousness, Ernest, do you guess what your expenses are?"

"'Sober seriousness!' What an invocation! Decidedly the House is disagreeing with you, Trevenna, and you are imbibing its professional dulness. Give the benches your estimates, please; don't try my patience with them. By the way, though, you are my finance-minister still: will you tell my lawyer to draw up Lady Valencia's settlements immediately, and see to the matter altogether yourself for me?"

"With pleasure. What instructions——?"

"That is just the point! Save my having to give any. I only give you one injunction," added Chandos, dropping his voice so that his attendants could not hear; "arrange them so that Lady Valencia can never feel she has not brought me a fortune as large as my own, and draw them up as you might have drawn them for a princess in her own right."

"As I should have done if you had followed the Duke's counsels.

But, as for these settlements, I should be glad of a little graver talk with you. Can you not stop half an hour?"

"I! I am fearfully late as it is; and I have promised Princess Anna to be in time for the Louis Quinze quadrille. Besides, I know what your graver talk means. My dear fellow, go in for supply, and attend committees, if such be your taste; but, for pity's sake, spare me legalities and finance. Settle what *they* wish upon her; I cannot give you a wider margin."

"Wide enough!" said Trevenna, grimly. "I wonder what would be left you if my Lady Chess filled it up! But that is not all, Chandos. Indeed——"

"Indeed, the 'all,' then, must wait for a better season," laughed Chandos, shaking the jewelled hilt of his rapier into its place: he was dressed as the Duc de Richelieu; while the Queen of Lilies would represent the Duchesse de Berry. "The princess would never speak to me again if I were to ruin her quadrille by my absence. Good-bye, my dear fellow; and don't learn gravity from St. Stephen's: I am sure you see a perpetual comedy *there*."

Trevenna looked at him as he swept out of the dressing-chamber, with the Clarencieux diamonds glittering at every point on the lace and embroidery, the black velvet and azure silk, the gold and the silver, of his dress of the Bourbon court.

"Go to your last night, monseigneur," he thought. "A week, and those diamonds will be for sale. You want settlements: well, you shall have them. The pear is ripe; it shall fall. Take a reprieve for to-night; nothing loses by anticipation. Ten years!—a long time. On my life, I feel rather like the watcher who looked out from his watch-tower through a whole decade to catch the first red light of the leaping flames. Ten years!—a long time; but Troy fell at last."

With which memory of the days of his school-desk hexameters, Trevenna drove on to the House, where he had already been in attendance from four to eight, and where there was a protracted though not important after-dinner debate.

Before he went to the body of the House, however, he turned a moment into the library, and wrote a little note, which he sent out to his groom to post.

It was addressed to Ignatius Mathias, and was condensed in one word:—

"Aet."

BOOK THE THIRD.

CHAPTER I.

"SPES ET FORTUNA VALETE."

"COME early to-morrow," murmured the Queen of Lilies, as her lover led her to her carriage, lifting her fair eyes, lustrous as those of the daughter of D'Orléans she personated.

Chandos stooped his head, so that his voice in its soft answer only reached her ear.

"Would that to-morrow were here, or, rather, that now we did not part!"

If he had ever doubted that he was loved, he could not have doubted it now, as he watched the warmth that flushed her face, the light over which her lashes drooped, the half smile, half sigh, which with that divine blush replied to him.

The costume-ball had been magnificent as though it had been given in the Regency age it celebrated, and the Louis Quinze quadrille had been the most splendid of all the square dances. The Richelieu dress excelled all others in the costly glitter of its grace; the Clarencieux diamonds outshone all others there. Royal women flattered him on "Lucrèce;" the greatest statesmen of the day pressed on him the restoration of his Marquisate; the world adored him as it had ever done, and feminine lips breathed him his most delicate and most dulcet incense. The night lived long in his memory. It was the last of his reign,—the last in which he loved the world and the world loved him.

It was late when the guests of the Italian princess left her imitation of the fêtes of Sceaux and of Versailles; the long line of carriage-lamps glittered far down to the right and left in the uncertain light of an early summer morning. Among the crowd a boy, of such beauty as belongs to the canvas of Spanish painters, stole noiselessly near, and, looking on, crouched, almost kneeling, in the shadow of the portico. One carriage rolled away; another, with the well-known white-and-silver liveries of Clarencieux, took its place; the name ran along the line of servants; the lad Agostino leaned eagerly forward. Down the steps of the entrance, under the awning, Chandos came,—the gaslight shed full on the rich colours and the gleaming jewels of his dress, as Richelieu himself might have come leaving the gatherings of the Palais Royal. So near leaned the boy that the gold and silk of the sword-knot touched his lifted forehead. The attendants ordered him sharply

off the pavement. Chandos, struck by the look upon his face, so eager, so longing, so full of youth and misery, stopped them, and paused a moment.

"My poor boy," he said gently, "do you want anything with me? Surely I have seen your face before?"

Agostino gazed up at him, pale to the lips, and with an utter abject wretchedness in the darkness of his eyes. He trembled violently. He would have given twenty years of his dawning life to have found courage for speech: yet, now that the opportunity so yearned and sought for came to him, the cowardice of his feminine nature held him paralysed.

"Speak. Do not be afraid," said Chandos, kindly. "If you want anything from me, say it without fear."

The boy's lips parted, but only inarticulate Spanish words halted upon them; the dread of his father's forbiddance, the horror of his English taskmaster's vengeance, held him powerless and speechless.

"That lad suffers; have him looked to," said Chandos, turning to the footmen nearest him. "What is your name?"

"Agostino Mathias."

The voice was husky and scarcely intelligible; a great terror—the terror of his tyrant—lay upon him; yet the strange sudden loyalty and love he had conceived for the English stranger, with the face like Guido Reni's golden-haired St. Michael, whom he had seen among the vine-fields of the Vega, looked upward longingly and piteously from his eyes.

"I shall remember," said Chandos, as he stooped nearer and put the sovereign or two that he had with him against the boy's closed hand. "Come to my house in the morning."

But Agostino shuddered from the touch of the gold, and shrank back against the stone of the portico.

"Not your money!—not *your* money!"

Chandos saw the gesture; he did not hear the murmured answer. He turned and dropped the pieces in the hand of the servant closest to him.

"That poor boy can be scarcely, I fear, in his right mind. See to him, will you?" he said, as he went down the few remaining steps and entered his carriage, which stopped the way of others. Agostino looked after him with passionate wistfulness, while the great tears gathered and brimmed over in his eyes. The footman touched him on the shoulder and addressed him. Like one roused out of fever and lethargy, the lad started and looked round, then wrenched himself out of the hold the man had laid on him, and fled like a frightened deer down into the darkness of the street. The servant let him go, and slipped the sovereigns in his waistcoat-pocket.

"If a boy who calls himself Agostino Mathias come here to-morrow, receive him, and let me know," said Chandos to his maître d'hôtel, as he passed up the staircase of his own house.

The man bowed as he heard Chandos' command.

"I will be very careful he is admitted, sir. I beg your pardon, but Mr. Trevenna bade me tell you he is waiting."

'Mr. Trevenna? Why, it is past four o'clock. Is Clarencieux burnt down, that he comes here at such a time?"

"I believe he said, sir, his business was urgent: he entreated to see you."

"A very good fellow, a very clever fellow, but a man with one failing; he never knows when he is *de trop*," he mused, as he went in into his own chamber, that was library, atelier, smoking-room, and art-gallery, all in one. It was always ready lighted, and, without waiting to take off his Richelieu dress, he stood against the mantel-piece, striking a match for a cigarette, and thinking, as his hand caressed the eagerly-lifted head of the dog, Beau Sire, less of what Trevenna could need him for, than of how lovely the Daphne looked in the mellow gleam of the light.

"Who would care for life without Art and Pleasure?" he thought.

The handles of the double doors turned sharply; the massive fall of the blue velvet *contre-vent* was thrust hastily aside; Trevenna entered. Chandos looked up, and laughed.

"Adieu to peace! You can't open a door, Trevenna, without jarring a room. Is Clarencieux burnt, a racer dead, my Titians stolen? or, what is it?"

"I beg your pardon for disturbing you, my dear Chandos," returned the other, with more gravity than had ever been seen in him before; "but it is very imperative that I should talk to you."

"Talk away, then!" rejoined Chandos, with a sigh of ennui and resignation: "but, for Heaven's sake, shake off that most unusual and unbecoming solemnity. Who ever would have thought a single week of St. Stephen's would have been enough to make a man so prosy? Or perhaps its only training for future 'office,' is it?"

Trevenna was silent; he came and stood on the hearthrug, with so rare and grave a seriousness upon him that he gave no light or humorous answer.

"Come," said Chandos, in some surprise and a little impatience; "silence is never your forte. Say what you have to say."

"Well, I'm a blunt man," answered his friend, as with some effort. "Plainly and briefly, I'm come on a disagreeable errand."

Chandos shrugged his shoulders.

"I'd a presentiment of that. People don't stay up for one on pleasant ones. *Après?*"

"*Après?*" said Trevenna, with something of his old malicious humour gleaming out in the corners of his mouth, "It *is* just the '*après*' that I'm come to talk about. You've had a comet-like course, *mon prince;* did you ever speculate how comets end?"

Chandos looked at him in supreme astonishment: he almost thought, for the moment, that Trevenna's habitual sobriety had given way, and that some hot wines heated his fancies.

"My dear fellow," he said, with a touch of stronger impatience, "You must really pardon me, but if you only keep out of bed to propose me astronomical riddles, I must, with all courtesy, bid you good-night."

"Monseigneur, have a little patience. I come on grave matters, and you must hear them," said Trevenna, quietly. "You lock annoyances out with double doors in this chamber; but I fear, do what you will, they will ferret through and follow you at last. I asked you before you went to your fancy-ball, if you knew at what rate you have lived and are living; I ask you, now you have come back from it, the same thing."

"And I give you the same answer: I do not know."

"Shall I tell you?"

"If you please."

"I will, then; but wait one moment You are perfectly happy, Chandos?"

Chandos looked at him again, in an astonishment not unmixed with amusement.

"I? Perfectly: I don't think I would live a day longer, if I were not."

Trevenna watched him as he spoke, leaning against the marble, with the deep glow of colour, the strewn treasures of art and wealth, the white grace of the statues, and the intense hues of the painted ceiling around and above. In the court costume, with the diamonds flashing through the lace and gold embroideries, the strong resemblance he bore to the last Marquis was as great as though the dead man lived again. Trevenna watched him, recompensed at last for a long decade of patient tact, for a lifetime of bitter envy, of gnawing mortification, of impotent hate, of festering jealousy,—watched him as the jungle-cheetah watches his prey before the final spring. He went leisurely about his work: the treasured preparation of such long and thirsty toil was not to be devoured in an instant, but tasted slowly in its wicked sweetness, drop by drop.

"You would not live a day, if your fortunes altered? I am sorry to hear that; for the world, then, may lose you soon. We must take those pretty ivory-handled pistols out of sight: for, though you are so happy now, I fear you will not be so happy in the future."

Chandos rose from the easy indolence of his resting attitude, and looked at him, with a new light rising in his eyes,—a light of anger and of impatience very seldom there.

"Jesters are privileged proverbially," he said, coldly; "but there are limits to their allowance when their jests have no wit and much insolence. If you have anything to say, say it plainly, and make an end."

"*Très-cher*," replied Trevenna, with an irresistible lapse into his habitual manner, "that confounded hauteur of you thoroughbreds is deuced provoking; it is, indeed; and people won't put up with it, perhaps, quite so patiently in future. As for saying plainly what I have to say, I suppose you will not believe me if I tell you that your expenditure is, and has been for many years, about quadruple what your income is?"

"My expenditure? Impossible!"

"Only too possible, unhappily. Royalties come expensive, *mon*

prince; and who wears the purples must pay for them. You have no notion, you say, of all that you have spent. What comes of a man's not knowing the rate at which he lives? Why, that, sooner or later, the last rope-strand gives way, and he is—ruined."

The word fell strangely on the silence of that tranquil chamber, bringing, like the stroke of death, desolation where all was peace.

Yet still the word passed by him whom it should have warned; his confidence was too secure, his carelessness too entire, his possession of all that was highest and richest and brightest of too long custom, for the first presage of the storm to have power to force its meaning on him.

"Have you drunk too much, or are you mad? This sort of fooling passes all license. If you indeed know what you are saying, I must beg you to leave my presence."

Trevenna, in answer, stood in a firmer, sturdier attitude, with his feet apart, and his arms folded like the Napoleonic statuettes.

"I am neither mad nor drunk, and I am not fooling. Briefly, Chandos, I must tell you what I have staved off perhaps too long; but I shrank from the task. I let time pass. I thought you might marry some rich or even royal bride, whose alliance would change the whole aspect; but your bidding me arrange the settlements for Lady Valencia compels me to withhold the truth no longer from you. There is nothing to settle on her!"

"Nothing to settle on her? What can you mean?"

"I mean what I say. There is not a sou's worth—not even those diamonds that glitter so bravely on your dainty dress—that is *free* to go to her dower. Can you not understand me when I tell you that you have lived at the rate of four times the amount of your annual income? What history does that simple fact suggest? You must be financier enough to know *that?* Hang it, Chandos! I am not a deep-feeling man,—I don't go in for all that, as you know; but I wish from my soul that I could spare you, or that some other could better break to you the news you must hear to-night."

Chandos listened; a deadly pallor came on his face, his lips grew white, his heart almost ceased to beat; the first shadow of this dim horror stole on him. A glimpse of its meaning was forced at length upon him; he had heard of such fates for other men.

"If you speak truth, speak out," he said, in that strange and deadly calmness which falls upon the mind and senses before the visitation of some great calamity. A faint, vague sense of this evil approaching him was all he felt; it was not possible that it could come to him yet more fixedly or fully.

"I speak the sad and sober truth," returned Trevenna, far more quietly than he had ever spoken, his eyes still resting on the Daphne opposite, as though to guard against a tell-tale flash from them of that lustful exultation that he knew was in their glance. "I can't speak to you as coyly and as delicately as your patrician

friends and relatives would do. I'm a plain, frank man, Chandos, and I've the very devil's own mischief-making to tell you of now: but, believe me once for all, it costs me almost as much to tell as it can do you to hear. There is no good in beating about the bush, —no good in being discursive over a thing so horrible as this; you must know the worst at once, and it is better, perhaps, told without varnish or veil; a short shrift and a quick death. That is truer mercy, after all, than all the endless preparation, your fellow-aristocrats might give you. Listen!——"

He paused a moment, as though that which he had to bring bore even him down in its bitter burden; but his eyes glanced swiftly and longingly at the man he tortured: he loved this protracted torment. Like a cat, he played with his victim's misery before he killed him; and if without suspicion he could have prolonged it through hours of ignorance and dread, he would have done so with all the endless patience of hate.

"Listen," he said, more softly; "as I have said, you have long lived—indeed, I think since your majority—at the rate of four times your income. You have kept two households in England nearly such as princes keep; you have had your Paris hotel, your Turkish palace; you have lavished money on art, like another Beckford; you have spent God knows what on women; you have given entertainments that cost you a couple of thousand a night: you have played the patron to every starving genius you met: in a word, you have lived like a king, my dear Ernest, and not being a king, your royalty has broken down, and will, I fear, end in a very unavoidable abdication. In a word, you are in debt to an extent I hardly dare compute to you. To sell everything you possess will hardly satisfy your claimants; bill-discounters and money-lenders have your signature in their hands, and will call for payment without mercy. Briefly, you have sold your birthright for ten years' enjoyment, and you now are, beyond all hope of ransom, irrevocably and most utterly—*ruined.*"

The word cut down again upon the stillness with a shrill, sharp, pitiless echo, as a sword cuts down through the air before it falls on the bowed neck of the doomed

Its utterance repaid its speaker for all he had foregone, for all he had foreborne, for every slight endured in silence from the world he hated, for every benefit taken with an inward curse from the man he hunted down. He loved that word so well, he could have dinned it on the silence in incessant repetition, hurling down with it the brilliant and gracious life he had so long envied from the thrones of pleasure and of power into the nethermost darkness of a hopeless desolation.

"Ruined? *I?*"

Chandos echoed the word as a man suddenly wakened from a deep, sweet sleep to learn some unutterable shame or misery that has befallen him, repeats the phrase that tells it, mechanically and without sense. The agony of horror that gathered, white and bewildered, on the gallant beauty of his face, was in as ghastly a contrast with the glittering splendour of his dress as though the

face of a corpse gazed out from the laces and jewels of a gay masquerade.

"Yes; even you, my brilliant Lord of Clarencieux!" answered the friend who stood upon his hearth; and with the words went an irrepressible snarl and sneer of triumph and of mockery that passed him unnoted in that moment of breathless, burning, inconceivable anguish. "*Even* you! Details you will learn for yourself hereafter, for to-night the broad, brief fact's enough. I would have warned you long ago, if you would only have listened; but you know as well as I do you would never hear of business, never think of money. Besides, in truth, I scarcely thought it was so very, so hopelessly bad as it seems now to be. I suppose your marriage with a bride who has no dower has set the fellows on: they are hounding for their moneys now like mad. I have had hard work to keep them even from arresting you; I have, upon my honour! To-night, when you went out to your princess's ball with all those thousands of pounds' worth of rose-diamonds about you, it was a wonder, on my life, that some one of your hungry creditors didn't stop those dainty jewels. You shall see to-morrow that I tell you but the plain, unvarnished truth. You are so deeply involved now, Chandos, that I doubt if there is a single little cabinet picture on these walls, or a single rood of land at your beloved Clarencieux, that in a month's time you will call your own——"

"Stop!—oh, my God! have some mercy!"

The words broke out like the last cry wrung from one driven to the extremity of physical endurance,—wrung from him in the abandonment of human misery against all strength of manhood and all power of will. He could bear no more, he was stunned and blinded like a man struck from behind him a murderous blow upon the brain which blasts his sight to darkness.

Ruin!—it had no meaning for him; it came to him like some dim, shapeless, devil-begotten thing that had no form or substance. a hideous lemur of a night's delirious dream.

Trevenna stood by and watched him; his hour had come at last, the hour which paid him back the cankerous evil, the relentless toil, the unremitting chase, of such long, wakeful, hungry years. This moment had been hoarded up by him as a miser hoards his gold, and now, in its full seizure, he was repaid for all his studied craft, for all his fondly-nursed revenge, for all his unrelinquished hatred,—repaid to the uttermost coin by every gasped breath that he counted, by every shiver of the voiceless anguish that he watched.

He did not heed the prayer for silence, but took up the broken thread of his discourse, and played with it as though loving it in every shape and on every side.

"Your property, you see, was fine, no doubt; but fine properties are not Monte-Christo caverns of exhaustless wealth. Dipped into, they will waste. You have eclipsed princes, and starred through all Europe; you pay now for the pre-eminence. You have had women's love,—no toy so costly! you have had the great world's worship,—no clientele so expensive! you have been a dilettante,

a *lion*, a leader of fashion, a man of endless pleasures,—no pursuits take so much gold! You have lived in such a style that you would have run through millions, had you had them; and you had not one million, though you had a noble inheritance. Of course you possess such quantities of pictures and statues, and all that kind of thing, and your estate itself is such an untouched mine, that there can be no fear of your personal liberty ever being endangered; but I am grievously afraid, I am indeed, that you will be obliged to give up almost everything,—give up even Clarencieux!"

The words, so deftly strung together to goad and taunt and add misery to misery, wound their pitiless speech, unchecked, with all the fiendish ingenuity of hatred that could not sate itself enough in the vastness of this wreck it wrought.

Chandos heard them, yet only dimly as men hear in whose ears the noise of great sea-waves is surging. He raised himself erect, rigid in an unnatural calm. Years of age and wretchedness could not have changed his face as this brief moment had changed it.

"You swear that this is truth?"

His voice was broken and strained, like the voice of a man just arisen from a bed of lengthened sickness.

"To the uttermost letter."

Chandos' head drooped as though he had been suddenly stabbed; all the vigour and grace and perfection of his frame seemed to wither and grow old; a shudder, such as the limbs shiver with involuntarily under some unendurable bodily torment of the flames or of the knife, shook him from head to foot.

As the flare of a torch suddenly shows the abyss that yawns beneath the traveller's feet, so the glare and the shame of the sentence he heard showed him the bottomless desolation over which he stood. He was wakened from his dreamful ease to be flung face to face with an absolute despair. For the moment strength gave way, manhood was shattered down, consciousness itself could keep no hold on life; the lights of the chamber reeled in giddy gyrations round him, a sound like rushing waters beat in on his brain, a darkness like the darkness of death fell upon him. He swayed forward, like a drunken man, against the broad marble ledge above the hearth; his hands instinctively clenched on the stone as the hands of those sinking to their grave down the glassy slope of an Alpine mountain clench on the ice-ridge that they meet; his head sunk on his arms, the suffocated labour of each breath panted out on the silence like a death-spasm:—at one stroke he was bereaved of all!

His torturer looked on. Never in the cells of the Inquisition could Franciscan or Dominican have watched the gradual wrenching of the rack, the winding-out of the strained limbs till they broke, the wringing and bruising and slaying of the quivering nerves till they could bear no more, as Trevenna watched this moral torment, this assassination of joy and honour, peace and love and fame, and every fair thing of a gracious world, laid desert and desolate at his word. He looked on, as in the legends of the early

Church devils looked on at the impotent despair of those whose souls they had lured and tempted and meshed in their net, and made their own. He looked on, and was repaid.

" Chandos," he said, gravely, almost softly, pouring the last drop of burning oil into the fresh wound his stab had dealt, " Chandos, believe me,—from my soul I *pity* you ! "

He had studied long the nature of the man now in his power, and he knew the keenest sting to give.

This man *pitied* him ! Chandos raised himself with sudden force; the pride of his race was not dead in him; and the same courage in the teeth of calamity, which had sent the last Marquis with a smile to the Tower scaffold, was in him now under the lash of his dependant's mockery of compassion. His face was strangely and terribly calm, but a premature age seemed to have withered all life from it; his lips were colourless, and on his forehead alone the dark congested blood flushed heavily, red and burning as in the heat of fever.

" If this *be* the truth, you have had little mercy in the telling ! Go; take the town your story; it will startle them. Spare more of it to *me !* "

The words were spoken with a tranquillity more horrible than the fiercest outbreaks of delirium or the most hopeless abandonment of woe.

Trevenna moved slightly; he could not meet the gaze of those calm tearless eyes, from whose depths there looked so wide a world of unuttered reproach, of unuttered agony.

" Chandos, Chandos, there will be no need for *me* to tell the town; it will be whispered soon enough ! Would you give the task to your debtor, your guest, your friend ? No ! There are too many who will take it fast enough. Leave it to the men you have outrivalled and the women you have forsaken; those are the glib tongues for such a theme ! As for mercy in the telling, what mercy can the man show who has to bring his death-warrant to another ? I would have warned you long ago, and you would not be warned. Is it my fault that you have wasted your princely substance and are a beggar now ? Oh, my friend, there is no error in this thing save your own."

Chandos gave a forward gesture, like a maddened animal rising to its spring; he did not reel, or stagger, or let escape one sign of the anguish within him, but he stood there upon his desolated hearth, erect, brought to bay as the deer by the sleuth-hounds, livid to the lips, with only the blood burning like fire across his brow, his golden hair dashed back disordered, his eyes proud and fearless even in their misery. It was no longer Alcibiades amidst the gay levity, the dreamy languor, the fragrant rose-crowns, and the laurel-wreathed amphoræ of the revels of his youth; it was Alcibiades, grander in his fall than in his reign, facing alone the dead cold of the winter's night and the unsheathed circle of his assassins' steel, until they cowed and fell asunder and pierced him with dastard surety from afar off with the arrows of the Bactrian bows. He raised his right hand and pointed to the door.

"If you are man, not devil, let me be! Go! I command you. Go!"

Bold though they were, his torturer's eyes could not meet his; victorious though he was, Trevenna dared not dispute that bidding; insatiate though his greed for this exhaustless triumph would still have been for hour upon hour, he was forced to obey that gesture of command. Mastiff-like both in courage and ferocity, he was still driven out as a murderous animal is driven out by the *will* it reads in a human gaze. He longed to linger there the whole night through, and ring every change upon that note of ruin, and watch every spasm of the overburdened life, and turn every screw and wheel in that rack on which he stretched his friend.

But he dared not; he felt that he must leave his work to bear its fruit and harvest of misery unwatched; he knew it as the murderers of Alcibiades knew that none could come near, with life, to the menaced danger and the mighty woe that looked unquailing on them from the flaming eyes of the roused Sybarite, the discrowned idol, the awakened Epicurean, called out in the dead of night to stand face to face with his destruction. The hirelings of Pharnabazus slew the Greek; Trevenna, less merciful, left the living man to suffer.

The velvet swept down behind him, the door closed, and he drew it softly after him; then he paused in the stillness of the breaking dawn that was rising on all the sleeping world without, and listened with an expectancy upon his face.

On the silence he heard a heavy crashing fall, like the fall of a stricken tree; then all was still with the stillness of the grave.

He smiled, and passed onward through the second door, and down the corridor and staircase of the house that had been opened to him, night and day, with a hospitality that no claims could weary and no exactions chill, and went out through the lighted hall, with its bloom of exotic colour and its richness of jasper and porphyry. As he passed the statue of the great minister standing there, white and majestic, amidst the foliage of American plants and the glow of Eastern flowers, he looked upward to the sculptured face with a glance of triumph, of achievement, of satisfied revenge, that in the intensity of its evil and its cruelty was almost grand by the sheer force of strength and purpose.

"Monseigneur, monseigneur," he murmured, in that thirsty exultation, flinging his victory and his mockery in the face of the lifeless marble, "how is it with your beloved one *now*?"

CHAPTER II.

"TOUT EST PERDU, FORS L'HONNEUR."

THE morning sun straying fitfully in through the thick leafy shades and trellised creepers of the winter garden beyond, as the day rose high and bright over a busy waking world, found the

ruined man lying where he had fallen, struck down by the blow that had beggared him of all, as a cedar is struck by the lightning. He lay there insensible to all except his agony, his hands clenched upon the leopard-skins that strewed his hearth, his brain heavy with the pent blood that seemed on fire.

The shock had fallen on his life as suddenly as, in tropic latitudes, the black tempestuous night falls down upon the shadowless day. Yesterday he had been rich in every earthly treasure; to-day he was beggared, shamed, dishonoured. Ruin!—it was upon him like the vague, confused horror of a nightmare whose bonds he could not break; he could not realise its despair nor measure its desolation; he felt like one drugged with opiate poisons that bring a thousand loathsome shapes thronging between their dreamer and the light of day and the world of men. He had been a stranger to the mere pain of transient human sorrow; he was stunned to unconsciousness by the world-wide misery that felled him down at a stroke, as the iron mace fells an ox. Hours passed; he knew nothing of their flight; the gas burned in the chandeliers above him, still shedding its flood of light that looked garish and yellow beside the brightness of morning that streamed in from the garden beyond. There was profound silence round him, broken by nothing save the monotonous murmur of the fountains falling yonder; the faint noise of the streets could not penetrate here, and the sounds of the moving household were shut out in a deathly stillness. He was left to the solitude which was all the mercy that life now could give him. The dog alone was with him, and crouched, patient and watchful, moaning now and then with sympathetic pain for the misery it could not comprehend, and gathered close against him where he lay.

As the sun grew brighter in the palm and flower isles beyond, the retriever tried to rouse him, as on a battle-field dogs will essay to waken their slaughtered masters; it thrust its muzzle against his hands, and laid its broad head against the disordered richness of his hair, moaning with piteous entreaty and fond, dumb caress. At last the patient efforts moved him; he looked up in the dog's eyes with a blind, bewildered gaze, and rose slowly and staggeringly to his feet, like a man feeble from protracted illness. He had no clear memory of what had passed; he could have recalled nothing, save that one word in which all was told,—"ruin!"

He looked mechanically round the familiar beauty of the chamber; the hues of the pictures, the grace of the sculpture, the lavish luxury of every detail, the peace and fairness of the charmed tranquillity, seemed so many mockeries of his woe. In the midst of wealth he stood a beggared man; with the world at his feet yesterday, he stood now dispossessed of every earthly thing.

He had sold his birthright for ten years' delight! And not of the world, not of his wealth, not of the fame of his name and the worship of men, not even of the woman whom he loved, did he think in that first moment of awaking to this mighty desolation that had fallen on him: it was of the trust of his

fathers that he had forfeited, of the home of his race that he had lost.

Esau-like, he had bartered his kingly heritance for the sensuous pleasures of an hour; and the sole memory that lived through the stupor of his brain were those brief, brutal words that devils seemed to hiss for ever in his ear—"You have lost all!"

A convulsion shook his limbs; a great voiceless sob rose in his throat; his head drooped upon his arms, veiling his face as the Romans veiled theirs before outrage and calamity. "Oh! my God! my God!" he prayed. in his agony, "give me death,—not *this!*"

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The only mercy life had left him—the privilege to suffer in solitude—could be his but a brief space. After the bitterness of the night followed the worse bitterness of the risen day, when its witnesses must come about him; when its wretched tale must be rung on his ear in all its changes; when the world must flood in to wonder, to smile, to sigh, to censure, and yet worse, to pity; when the condemned must go out to the cross, to be stretched and nailed and lifted up in crucifixion within sight of the gathered crowds. When he remembered all these things, it seemed to him more than life could bear to go through them; when he slowly roused to the real meaning of this beggary that had suddenly seized him in the midst of his joyous and magnificent existence, he recoiled from its endurance with a sickening shudder, as the bravest man will recoil from the approach of a drawn-out and excruciating death.

Once the thought passed him,—Why meet it? Why await this living grave which yawned for him, when the rest of the dead might be taken,—the blank, blest silence of the tomb be his, instead of the world's pillory and the exile's wretchedness?

Close at his hand lay the pistols to which his torturer had referred with a jest that might be his tempting; they were loaded to the muzzle, as they had been carelessly laid down the morning previous, after an hour's pistol-shooting in his gardens below with a gay party. His grasp mechanically closed on one of them. Over and over again, in his serene security of happiness, he had smiled and said he would not live to brook a single hour of pain; the jest had become a terrible reality. One touch, one moment's blindness,—then oblivion; the world and his own ruin would be as naught, powerless to sting or harm. Were it not better than to live on to face all that must come to him with the rising day? The old weary wonder of Hamlet, that pursues every mind through every age, rose in him now; the old, eternal, never-answered question came to him as it comes to so many:—Why live, when every breath of life is pain?

For a moment his worst foe was nigh the fulfilment of his worst wish; for a moment, in the devastation of every hope and every possession, death and its escape allured him with a horrible force. All that made life worth the living was dead in him, the body only was left to perish: why leave breath in it, when to

breathe was only to prolong and to intensify an anguish without hope? For a moment he lifted the weapon up; its chill touch was the only kiss left to him now, the only caress of pity he could know. His head sunk down against it, leaning on its mouth as it had used to lean on the softly-beating hearts of women who loved him. A moment, and his dead limbs would have been stretched there on his hearth in such a close to the history of his life as would have sated even the lust of his unrelenting foe.

A ray of the sun, straying in across the yellow heat of the chandelier-lights, fell across the white features of a bust that stood at the far end of the chamber,—the same features and the same sculpture as the statue to which Trevenna had murmured his valediction. The light illumined the marble, giving to the mouth almost breath, to the eyes almost life, with its sweet spring-day warmth. Chandos saw it as his own eyes stared vacantly and without sense into the empty space.

His arm dropped; his hand unloosed its hold; he laid the weapon down unused.

He had treasured his father's memory, he had venerated his father's fame, with a great love that no time weakened. He remembered how his father once had bidden him make "the people honour him for his own sake;" and he was about to die a dog's death by his own act, lacking the courage to rise and meet the fate that his own madness brought him!

With that memory the temptation passed. Philip Chandos had died, like Chatham, in his nation's cause; the last Marquis had died upon the scaffold to save his honour from forfeit, and those who had trusted him from betrayal; he would not put beside *those* deaths the history of a suicide's fall.

Such as his doom was, he accepted it.

He rose and walked towards the window, with the uncertain, tremulous gait of a man dead-drunk. He drew the heavy curtains aside, and looked out with aching, scorching eyes. The hum of the streets in the distance rolled in on the morning air; the faint busy noises of life came across the stillness of the gardens; a clock was striking twelve. Each sound, each murmur, every echo of the existence stirring round him, every shiver of the linden-leaves near him, throbbed through his brain as though they were the clanging, jangling iron strokes of deafening bells; every sense and pulse of living things came to him with an excruciating pain, like the touch of a knife on a bared nerve. The day was at its height; solitude could be no longer possible. Even now the woman whom he loved watched for his coming; in a few hours his world awaited him; even that very night, all that was highest and fairest in the land was bidden to his house; even that very night, the fame and the fashion of his name were to give success to the crippled artist's best-beloved creation. The world looked for him; to be alone was too rich a luxury, too merciful a sentence. He must go out and endure this thing which had come to him, in the broadness of daylight,—in the sight of all men.

As memory rushed on him of all that must be borne, of all that

had been lost, he bent his head as though under the weight of some insupportable bodily burden; a sickness of horror was upon him; he strove to realise all that was ended for him, and he could not. Only yesterday his hands had been filled with every fairest gift of life; he could not bring himself to know that they were now stricken as empty as the outstretched hands of any beggar sitting at his gate.

The paralysis of an absolute despair fell on him, mute, tearless, unmoved,—the rigidity that falls on mind and brain and heart under the pressure of some immeasurable adversity.

He had to hear the worst; with the rising day came all the day's course must unfold. He could not have the partial peace of loneliness; he could not have such comparative mercy as those have who, bereaved of what they love, know their doom at once, and can seek solitude to bear it. Step by step, letter by letter, he must pass through every detail of his desolation; and, soon or late, publicity must proclaim it to all who should choose to listen. He could have no rest, no pause, no reprieve; his misery had hunted him down, and must be met and faced.

The sun shining in through the gas-light, that burned dull and lustreless in the noonday, shone on the diamonds glittering on his dress; his eyes fell on them as, in the extremity of wretchedness, the mind will strangely play with some trifle of which it has no consciousness. He looked at them dreamily, and wondered why he wore them: a blank had fallen between him and every memory; it seemed a life-time since the night just passed; it seemed as though the life that was parted from him by a few hours only, had been destroyed for an eternity. Yet with the sight of them came one remembrance; he heard, as if it stole on his ear now, the low whisper of the lips he loved, as they had murmured, "Come to me to-morrow,"—murmured it with the softness of a good-night blush, with the lingering light of sweet eyes of farewell!

The morrow was now to-day. How had it dawned for each!

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He had to hear the worst. In this thing there could be no delay; under this sentence there could be no waiting-point of preparation or of hope. He must meet the gaze of other men, and listen while their voices coldly told the story of his ruin.

He bade them come and tell him all,—to the furthest letter of his doom. Despair is often bitterly calm; it was so now with him. In solitude, nature had given way, and sunk prostrated; before another's eyes, pride supplied the place of strength, and lent him its fictitious force.

With the noon, Trevenna returned, as a hound returns to the slot of his quarry, when once loosed from the coursing-slip that has held it back perforce. He re-entered the chamber as soon as permission came to him. He was the holder of all papers, the comptroller of all finance, the director of all affairs, connected with the Clarencieux properties; with him, even more than with the lawyers, lay the knowledge of all their minutiæ; through him, more than through any, must come the unfolding of the million

things that went to make up the one vast sum of destruction. He could not be driven out from the scene of his work; for by him alone could the thousand meshes of the net which, unseen and unsuspected, he had woven, be traced and moved. He had secured more than his victory and his vengeance; he had secured the imperative necessity that he should behold the fruits of both.

Yet even he, evil as was the brute greed in him, started at sight of the wreck that he had wrought. Last night he had looked upon Chandos in the full brilliance of his youth, of his splendour, of his fashion, of his shadowless content; he saw him now broken, exhausted, aged, altered as the flight of twenty peaceful years could never have changed him. He was still in the court-dress of the ball he had quitted when his fate fell on him: its richness was disordered, its lace crushed and soiled, its ribbon-knots and broideries tangled; but its jewelled elegance set in deadlier contrast the haggard whiteness of his face, the shattered look of his whole form; it marked in ghastlier contrast what he had been and what he was.

The gas was still burning in all the crystal globes and silver branches as Trevenna entered. Chandos had no sense of the things that were about him, of the dress he wore, of the passage of the noonday hours; and his household, who felt that some great adversity had suddenly befallen him, dared not venture nigh unsummoned. He stood against the hearth as his guest advanced; his eyes were bloodshot, his hair disordered and damp with the dew of his forehead; his face was bloodless: beyond these, he "gave no sign."

He looked at Trevenna with a tranquil, lingering gaze; if there were reproach in it, the reproach remained otherwise unspoken.

"Tell me all," he said, briefly; and his voice, faint though it was, did not falter.

For one instant his traitor was silent, baffled, and wonder-struck.

Fine as were his intuition and insight into character, he had made an error common with men of his mould; he had undervalued a nature it was impossible he could comprehend. Studying the weaknesses of his patron's temper, he had not perceived that they were rather on the surface than ingrained; he had disdained the facility that had lent Chandos so willing a tool into his hands, the gentleness, the frankness, the generosity, the unsuspecting pliability of temper; he had looked with contempt on the imaginative, idealic mind, and the effeminate softness of the man he hated. He had never perceived that there were qualities beneath these that might leap to life in an instant, if once roused; he had never dreamed that Alcibiades the voluptuary could ever become Alcibiades the warrior. Had he found Chandos shot by his own hand, in the light of the young day, he would have felt no surprise; he would have thought the close in fitting keeping with the tenor of his career; to find him braced to look his desolation calmly in the face, staggered, and almost unnerved him.

But in an instant he recovered himself. The ruin was complete; and it should go hard, he thought, if to it he did not drive his victim to add—dishonour!

With the concise rapidity of a mind trained to *précis*-writing and to logical analysis and compression, he had every detail clear as the daylight, proved to the letter; and he showed with mathematical exactitude that everything was gone. His papers were of the plainest, his accounts the most perfectly audited, his representation of others' statements lucid to a marvel. If he had been opening a budget to a crowded House, he could not have more finely mingled conciseness with comprehensiveness, geometrical exactitude with unerring quotation, than now when he came to prove the hopelessness of his best friend's beggary.

Hopeless it was. The inheritance which Chandos and his world had thought so secure and so exhaustless, had melted away as a summer evening's golden pomp and colour fade, till not a line of light is left to show where once it glowed. It was the old, worn-out, ever-recurring story of endless imprudence, of absolute destruction. If other hands had woven half the meshes of the net spread round him, if other hands had spread their snares and temptings to make the fatal descent the surer, if any villany were in this thing, there was no trace that could even hint it. It might even have been said that the best had been done, with patient labour, to arrest the downward and irresistible course of a blind and unthinking extravagance, and done wisely and toilsomely, though in vain.

The whole mass of the fortune was expended; the debt-pressure had accumulated to an enormous extent. Who could say where what was scattered was gone? Who could check now the piled-up bills of hirelings and kitchen-chiefs? Who could tell now whether all the great sums paid had been paid rightly? Who could know now whether the items of that magnificent prodigality were justly scored down or not? It would have been as hopeless a task to thread the buried intricacies of all these things, as to take the Danaïds' labours and seek to fill with the waters of a too-late prudence the bottomless vessels through which this lost wealth had been poured.

Trevenna, indeed, showed how, when he had first come to share any management of these matters, the locust-swarm had already eaten far into the fair birthright that Philip Chandos had bequeathed. He failed to show why he had not forced the bitter knowledge on his friend's careless ease in time to save much, though not all: yet even this discrepancy in his narrative he glossed over with an orator's skill, a tactician's sophistry, until he seemed throughout it to have been the one steadfast, wise, and unheeded Artabanus who had vainly stood by the side of the crowned Xerxes and pleaded with him not to fling riches and honour and life into the grave of the devouring Ægean.

Chandos heard in unbroken silence.

Gigantic sums were numbered and added before him in gigantic confusion. Tables of figures and of estimates were placed before his eyes, and told him nothing, save that their sum-total was—

bankruptcy! He had never known or asked the cost of the pleasures he enjoyed; he had never speculated on the worth of all the luxuries by which he had been surrounded from his infancy. His mind had never been trained to balance the comparisons of receipt and expenditure. He could have told, to a marvel of accuracy, whether a picture, a statue, a cameo, was worth its price, through the fineness of a connoisseur's judgment; but beyond these he knew no more than any child-Dauphin in the Bourbon age what was the value of all the things which made up the amusement and the adornment of his life. A man well skilled in finance finds it a hopeless task to glean the truth of squandered moneys. To him only one thing could stand out clear and immutable,—the fact that all was gone. It was impossible for him to dispute the mass of evidence heaped before him, as impossible also to dispute the mass of debt that was brought before him. He had believed that no creditor had ever had claim on him for a day; but, now that the demands were made, he could not prove they were undue. Of receipts, of accounts, he had never given a thought: his agents and his stewards had been allowed *carte blanche* to do as they would; they could not be blamed for having used the power, and there was no evidence that they had abused it. The demands of the debts were vast; there was not a witness that could be brought to their injustice or their illegality. There was nothing with which to face or to deny them; they must devour as they would. He heard in unbroken silence. Once alone he spoke; it was as the name of Tindall and Co., the bill-discounting firm, among his creditors, came into sight, pressing for heavy sums.

"How are *they* among the swarm?" he said, with that unnatural serenity which he had preserved throughout the interview unmoved still. "I never in my life borrowed gold, either of Jew or Christian."

For an instant the face of his tormentor flushed slightly with the same transient emotion of shame which had moved him in the portrait-gallery of Clarencieux.

"For yourself? Perhaps not to your own knowledge," he answered, promptly; "but for your friends you have many a time. How many bills you have accepted for men in momentary embarrassment! In nine cases out of ten these bills have never been met by those in whose favour they were drawn. They have always been popular with the trade. Your signature was thought the signature of so rich a man! This firm has bought in most of that floating paper, and has taken its own time to press for payment: that time has come at last. There lies your writing; the bills cannot be dishonoured without dishonouring you. No loan was ever so costly to its lender as that loan which looks so slight at first,—the loan of your mere name!"

Chandos heard him calmly still. The extremity of misery had reached him, and the peace of absolute hopelessness was on him.

"You say, 'perhaps not to my own knowledge;' unknown to me, then, have I borrowed moneys of these usurers?"

"Once or twice lately,—yes. Forgive me, Chandos, if in my

zeal to screen or save you I plunged you deeper into this chaos. You sent over for great sums to be lodged in Turkish and Athenian banks, whilst you were abroad this winter: you wrote to me to lodge them there. I knew that if I sent, on your bidding, to your own bankers, the amounts you required from time to time would overdraw by thousands the little left of your original capital, and that the bank would inform you of your improvidence without delay or preparation. I could not tell how to spare you; and I always persuaded myself that in some way or other—mainly, I thought, by some very high marriage—you would rebuild your shattered fortunes. I went to these Tindall people; I effected arrangements with them to supply you with the moneys. They held my acknowledgments for the amounts till you returned, they knew me and they knew you. When you came back, you may remember, I brought you papers to sign at Clarencieux, and pressed you to give me a business interview. You would not wait and hear me,—you never would; you signed; and I had not heart or courage, I confess, to tell you then at how terrible a pass things were with you. I did wrong; I admit it frankly. I was guilty of what I should call the most villanous procrastination in another man; but I knew it was too late to save you. I was willing to let you have as long a reprieve in your soft pleasures as I could; and until your engagement with the Lady Valencia, I always thought that some distinguished and rich alliance would restore the balance of your affairs. And there is this much to be said for it: the error I committed in essaying to save you, added but very, very little to the mountain already raised of inextricable debts and difficulties. It only gave you six months more of peace: you, self-indulgent as you have been, would have deemed even those worth the purchasing."

The sophistries were deftly spoken. To a man more aware of business customs and of monetary negotiations, Trevenna would have been too astute to offer such an untenable and unlikely explanation; with Chandos the discrepancies passed unnoted, because he knew nothing of the method of pecuniary transactions. All he had known had been to draw money and to have it But, though the financial errors passed him, his instinct led him to feel the falsity and the hollowness of the arguments to himself. Suspicion was utterly foreign to him; his attachment to Trevenna was genuine and of long date; doubt forced itself slowly in on a nature to which it was alien. yet a vague loathing of this man, who had let him go on unwarned to his destruction, began to steal on him; a disbelief in his friend wound its way into his thoughts with an abhorrent strength.

"I understand," he said, simply; "you have betrayed me!"

For the instant his traitor's eyes drooped, his cheek flushed, his conscience smote him. Under the accusation of the man to whom he owed all, and whom he had pursued with a bloodhound's lust, the baseness of his own treachery rose up for a single moment before his own sight. But it passed; he even frankly met the eyes whose silent reproach condemned him more utterly than any words.

"Betrayed? Do you take me for a second Iscariot? Betrayed! how so? Because I tried to save you pain with means that proved at best fallacious? Because I was guilty of an error of judgment that I frankly regret and as frankly condemn? No! blame me as you will, I may have deserved it; but accuse me of disloyalty you shall not. If every one had been as faithful to you, Ernest, as I have been, you would not now hear the history of your own ruin."

There was a grim, ironic truth in the inverted meaning of the last sentence, that the temper of the speaker relished with cynical humour. If others had been as faithful in friendship as he had been in hatred, the positions of both would have indeed been changed.

Chandos answered nothing; his eyes still rested with the same look on the man whom he had defended through all evil report and enriched with such untiring gifts. The truth of his own nature instinctively felt the falsity of the loyalty avowed him; yet that such black ingratitude could live in men as would be present here were his doubt real, took longer than these few hours—more evidence even than these testimonies—to be believed by him. He had loved humanity, and thought well of it, and served it with unexhausted charity.

Trevenna moved slightly; hardened and tempered as was the steel of his bright, bold audacity, even he could not bear the voiceless rebuke that asked still, "*Et tu, Brute?*"

"Let us speak of the future," he said, rapidly; "we have seen that the past is hopeless and irremediable. You know the worst now; how do you purpose to meet it?"

"You have said already, all must go."

The same perfect tranquillity was in the reply; it was the ossification of despair.

"True,—even Clarencieux."

An irrepressible shudder shook his listener's limbs, but he bent his head in unchanged silence.

"And will the woman you love not go with the rest?"

"She will be given her freedom."

Trevenna looked at him with the same impatient amaze with which he had started as he had entered the chamber. He could not realize that the voluptuary whose weakness he had so long studied, that the pleasure-seeker whose pococurantism had so long been the subject of his scorn, could be the man who answered him now, thus calm in his endurance.

"But, if she love you, she will not take it. If all that you poets say of the sex be true, she will cling but the closer to you in your fallen fortunes. What think you? I, I confess, doubt it. She is so poor; she is so ambitious; she has so sought the restoration of your Marquisate!"

Chandos stretched out his hand; his breath caught as with the pang of one who can endure no more.

"It matters nothing to speak of this. I have heard your worst tidings; now leave me for a space."

"No; hear me yet a little longer. I fancy I see a way to spare you some portion, at least, of your heritance, and to spare you at least this loveliness you covet. Will you listen?"

He made a gesture of assent. Hope was dead in him; but he was passive through the very exhaustion of extreme suffering.

"See here!" pursued his tempter. "If you go to her and say, 'I am a beggared man,' will her tenderness remain with you? You know her best. I trust it may; but, frankly, my friend, I fear! She loves you; yes, all women do. She loves you as well as *she* can love; but she loves power more. Tell her of this thing which has overtaken you, and I believe she will be lost to you for ever."

Chandos shrank from the words.

"Leave me! let me be! It avails nothing——"

"Yes, it does. *Why need she know it?*"

The question stole out, tempting and alluring as the sophistries that beguiled Faust.

"Why?" He re-echoed the word almost in stupor.

"Ay, why? Who need tell her? Listen here. I can temporise with your creditors for a little while. Each does not know how heavy the claims of the rest are, and none wholly suspect—hell-hounds though they be—how complete is your beggary. Your marriage is fixed for an early date from this; let the settlements be drawn up as they *would have been*, and the ceremony concluded. A marriage, even though to a penniless bride, will throw your creditors off their cast. They will believe you are secure, or would you wed with one so portionless? You can leave for abroad on your marriage-day; I fancy I could quiet them enough to let you go. Take the Clarencieux diamonds with you. Meanwhile I will send off, under divers names and in secret, many treasures of yours, that will pass out of England unknown to those who have these claims, and will be sufficient by their sale to enable you to live in moderate ease, though, it is true, without affluence. The rest you must let go; but you will have secured much,—your liberty, your love, and a remnant of your possessions."

"What! you would tempt me to dishonour!"

"Dishonour? Whew!" answered Trevenna, lightly. "Call it so, if you like. *I* call it common sense. How many men, pray, quit England for their debts, and see nothing but a sensible care-taking for themselves in it? Doubtless there are in those bills and estimates very heavy overcharges—we can't check them now; but I don't doubt there are; *maîtres d'hôtel* will cheat, butlers will charge per-centage, tradesmen will add compound interest, bill-discounters will demand usurer's toll; if you take a little from them, you only take your own. As regards your fair Queen of Lilies, if she love you, what wrong can you do her? Wed her, and she will be your own; and, granted, she is very lovely. Go to her now and say, 'I am a beggared, self-outlawed, ruined man,' and you must know as well as I, Chandos, that in a few months' time you will see her given to one of your rivals' arms."

Chandos swept round to face him, the fire of passion flashing into

the weary pain of his eyes, the contraction of a great torture in the quivering lines of his lips.

"Are you a fiend? You would tempt me to disgrace, after having lured me into ruin——"

"Patience, *caro mio*," said his allurer, softly. "You are hard on your best friend. Tempt you? what is there of 'dishonour' in what I suggest? On my life, I see nothing. Last night you knew no more of your ruin than the world knows now; certainly, you are justified in withholding the world from your confidence as long as you choose. Is a man 'dishonoured' because when he holds a bad hand at whist he does not show the cards and tell his ill luck, but keeps his own counsel, and plays the game out in the best way he can? *Your* cards are bad now; but you are no more bound to expose them than he. Men are not your keepers, that you are called on to proclaim to them that, while you thought yourself a millionaire, you were in truth a beggar. You are proud: why give yourself this degradation? why pillory yourself for public mockery? You have dazzled them and outshone them: will you bear their laugh and their sneer when the tables are turned? You have had homage from the highest: will you brook it when the lowest, unpunished, may jeer at your fall? You have lived with royal brilliance: will you feel no sting when society chatters of how rotten at core was the royalty? You love with all the blindness of passion: will you feel no sting when the beauty you covet is possessed and enjoyed by another?"

Blunt, sometimes coarse, in ordinary speech, when he saw occasion, Trevenna could summon both eloquence of language and persuasiveness of phrase; could wind with subtle tact into the hearts of his listeners, and strike surely and softly what bolt he would home.

Chandos heard him; his head had sunk upon his breast, and from his white, parched lips his breath came in painful, gasping spasms. His agony was mortal; his temptation, for the moment, was very great.

Subtlely and insidiously the words stole on his ear, goading pride, torturing passion, waking all the longing of desire, lulling and confusing every dictate of honour, like the dreamy potence of a nicotine, till cowardice looked strength, fraud looked wisdom,—till a sin seemed just, a lie seemed holy.

"Because you have forfeited your birthright," pursued his Iscariot, "you are not called on to beggar yourself utterly, and to summon the world in to pity and to jibe you. That which you did not know yourself last night, it can be a small sin not to proclaim to men to-day! If she love you, she will thank you that you do not mar her sweetest hours with your own calamity. If she love you, the blow will fall softened on her if she only learn it when she is your wife, whom no evil can part from you. Conceal your ruin but a few weeks,—a few days,—and the woman you covet is yours; proclaim it now, and you will forfeit *her*, with all the rest that you have gambled away in ten mad years. Do as I say, and her beauty is your own."

A sigh, wrenched as in a death-pang, alone answered him.

"Can you hesitate?" said Trevenna; and his eyes gleamed with an eager light as he lured his prey on. "Only withhold for a few days the knowledge you yourself had not last night, and she is given to you; tell it, and some other will taste the sweetness of her lips, and rifle as his own the loveliness you covet. Choose!"

A low moan broke from the man he tortured; he wavered; he almost yielded; he was sorely tempted.

All his nobler, better instincts were forgotten under the spell of that insidious tempting: all he knew was the yearning of his love; all he heard was the subtle voice that bade him take evil as his good, and hung out to him, as the sole price of all he longed for, one single sin,—*a lie!* A sin so venial, as men hold it,—a sin so familiar in the world, that every trader's ordinary commerce and every social difficulty's small entanglement is filled with it and solved by it,—a sin so slight, as a baneful license has decreed it, yet a sin in his eyes accursed as the vilest of dishonour,—a sin, as he deemed it, that would mark him out for ever an alien to his blood and a disgrace to his name.

For the instant only it tempted him,—tempted him with all the mad longing of passion that dulled and dwarfed all other thoughts in its own intensity. He lifted his head, and for the moment his voice rang with the old clear melody of other days:—

"Out of my presence! Cease to tempt me!—cease to torture me! By God, I will *not* yield!"

Trevenna bowed, and backed towards the door; he was too careful a tactician to press what was useless, to pursue what was unasked.

"So be it; I have done! I spoke but in the roughness of my common sense, in the ignorance of my coarser nature of the fine porcelain you haughty gentlemen are made of. I would have served you, had you let me; but since you have such a fancy for flinging yourself to the crying pack, why, it must be so; and *they* are ready! You have the last marquis's superb consolation,—'*Tout est perdu, fors l'honneur.*' I hope it may content you!"

Chandos, from where he stood, crossed the room with a sudden impulse, as a stag, driven from bay, springs at the hounds surrounding him.

"If it were not to make you viler than the beasts, I should think it failed to content *you*, and that, after the beggary you have let me drift to without a word of warning, you want to drive me farther yet down into shame and shamelessness!"

Trevenna looked at him with a steady, unflinching gaze: he was on his guard now.

"You speak on the spur of pain, *mon prince*, and wrong me. I sought to serve you. If my blunter, ruder senses failed to feel the 'dishonour' your aristocratic blood recoils from, put it down to my failure in delicacy, not to my lack of loyalty. One word more, and I leave you, at your wish. Have you forgotten that this is the day of the new opera, and that all your world will be about you before many hours? Without you, the opera must fail. Shall I give out that you are ill, and that the matter is postponed?"

Chandos shuddered involuntarily, and the nerves of his mouth quivered. All that had befallen him, all that the future held, had never stood out before him in its desolation as now, when he remembered—the world.

"Alter nothing," he said, with an effort. "Let them come."

"Come! What! Can you meet them?"

He smiled—a smile more utterly haggard and heart-broken than any sign of grief. There was a meaning in it, too, from which the daring and hardy nature of his foe recoiled.

"I have neither killed myself nor you in these past hours. There is little that will be hard to endure since I have withheld from *that!*"

Trevenna looked upward at him for one glance; then, silenced and with an unfamiliar awe and fear upon him, let fall the heavy velvet and left him once more to his solitude.

CHAPTER III.

THE LOVE OF WOMAN.

THE Queen of Lilies stood beside one of the windows of her own boudoir, restless, disquieted, half swayed by anger and half by anxiety. So many hours of the day had passed, and her lover had not approached her. Where she stood there was nothing near her but the foliage and clusters of innumerable flowers; the brightness of the declining day was shed full on hers. She looked a woman to satisfy a sculptor's dream, to haunt an artist's thoughts, to be hymned in a poet's cancion; yet there was about her that nameless and fugitive coldness which, in the fairest statue, chills the senses and the heart.

Her hand was listlessly wandering among the clusters of blossoms; and every now and then, as the impatience and disquiet of her thoughts increased, she broke them off and cast them down, beating her foot in haughty irritation on them till their fragrance and their colour perished.

The door unclosed; she turned, a smile lighting her eyes, and lending a lovely warmth to her cheek. She swept forward with the grace of her step, with half-playful, half-proud words of reproach for such unexplained desertion. Quickly they paused upon her lips; she looked in his face alarmed and amazed.

"Ernest! what has happened? You are ill?"

For all answer, he pressed her to his heart and kissed her many times with a passion almost terrible in its force, the fever of his lips scorching her own like fire. He held her as men hold the dead form of their mistress, which they must lay down and leave for ever, never again to meet their sight, never again to cling to their embrace.

Then in silence he released her, with his last caress upon her lips, and moved from her, while his limbs, weak with long fasting,

shook like a woman's, and his head sank down upon his breast He would sooner have gone out to his death upon a scaffold than have told her what he came to tell.

She watched him in fear and terror. She saw that he suffered as no physical pain could make him suffer; she saw that he was altered as no illness could have changed him. She swept softly to his side again; she laid her fair arms round him; she lifted to him her beautiful face, which in that moment tempted him to dishonour as his betrayer's words had never done.

"My love, my love," she murmured, anxiously, "what is it?—what has grieved you?"

He turned his eyes on hers, and in them she read a look that paralyzed her, that haunted her throughout her lifetime,—a look of such unutterable anguish that she cowered down and shrank back as she met it, struck by it as by a blow.

"Calamity has come to me," he said briefly, whilst his voice sounded hollow as a reed, and wrung from him as confessions were wrung from men upon the rack. "I have been a living lie to you and to the world. Listen."

Then, as he spoke the last word, his calm forsook and his strength failed him; he fell before her, his hands clenched in her dress, his head bowed down upon her feet. In a few broken, passionate, disconnected words, wild in their misery, yet burned into her mind for ever as aqua-fortis burns its record into steel, he told her all.

There was a profound silence in the chamber,—a silence in which he only heard the dull, oppressed beating of his heart,—a silence in which his head was still bowed down as he knelt. He dared not look upward to her face. He loved her, and it passed the bitterness of death to bring this misery on her young life; he loved her, and he had to utter words that might divorce them for eternity.

For many moments the silence lasted,—a silence so agonized to him that in it he seemed to live through years, as men in the moments of a violent death. He longed, as one perishing in the desert longs for water, for one word of tenderness, one promise of fidelity; he longed for them with an intensity great as the fall he bade her look upon.

None came.

She drew herself slowly from him where he knelt, and stood in the dignity of her matchless grace, mutely gazing at him with those eyes which had all the chilliness, as they had all the lustre of the stars. Her face was white and drawn like his own; but in the amazed fixity into which it had set, there was no trace of pity for him, there was no grief that sprang from tenderness.

"This is a strange tale," she said, at last, and her voice was bitterly, bitterly cold, though it was tremulous with the tremor of incredulous rage. "A strange tale. You must pardon me if I fail to believe it."

He looked for the first time upward at her. All hope he might unconsciously have cherished that her love might be stronger than

its trial, and vows that had been vowed him in his prosperity not prove false in his adversity, forsook him now. He rose slowly to his feet, and stood beside her; and in his eyes came the same wistful reproachful pain that had been in them when he had looked at his betrayer.

"Believe!" he said, wearily; "believe! Can you look me in the face and doubt?"

She stood aloof from him, lifted in her full height, her foot beating the bruised colourless petals of the flowers she had destroyed, her fair face haggard and rigid, her gaze fixed on him, pitiless yet passionate in the coldness of its unrelenting scorn.

"Believe!" she repeated, while her lips shook and her bosom heaved. "Believe that you are the ruined bankrupt that you tell me,—yes; but believe that you have been in the ignorance of your own beggary that you plead,—no! ten thousand times *no!*"

He looked at her in a mute amazed stupor. He had never known but the tenderness and the softness of women. This vileness of imputed fraud flung at him by the one who, but a moment before, had lifted her sweet lips for his kiss, paralyzed him with its wantonness of merciless indignity.

"Ruin does not fall in a day," she pursued, while the haughty acrid words came from her lips in a quiver of rage that her graceful breeding alone reined in from the violence of passion. "Such ruin as yours is, you confess, the work of years. How perfectly you have duped the world and me!"

He who had loved her with a great and most disinterested love, yet who had refused to win her through a falsehood, could have killed her in his agony as he heard her now,—could have crushed her in his embrace, and trampled out this life that looked so fair and was so merciless, that had smiled on him with so divine a forgery of love, and that flung at him in his darkest hour a dishonour that his worst foe would never have dared to hint.

Yet he stood before her with a calm dignity, a proud reproach.

"Look in my eyes, and see if I could lie! Had I chosen, I could have wedded you by a fraud, and made you mine, in ignorance of my fall. As it is, I set you free: it is your right."

"My right? Indeed! My right! The pity is you did not earlier remember what my rights and the world's both were, ere you chicaned us and misled us with the paste brilliance of your tinsel glitter. You could have wedded me by a fraud. I wonder you could hesitate at one fraud *more*, when you were so long practised in so many."

"Oh, God!—And yesterday you loved me!"

The cry broke out involuntarily from him. Yesterday her soft caresses had been his; a few days or weeks later, and she had been his wife; now—from *her* lips poured the cruellest invectives his ruin could ever hear, from *her* thoughts came the foulest taunt that could be thrown at him to goad his wretchedness.

"Yesterday,—yes! Yesterday the world and I alike believed in your honour and your rank. Yesterday we did not know you as you are,—a gamester, a trickster, a living falsehood to us both."

Men under less torture than he bore then have killed with a madman's blow the fair, false thing that taunted and that jibed them. A convulsive effort of self-restraint shuddered through him; then he stood tranquil still, and almost yielding to her still the forbearance her sex claimed for her. She had no pity for him; he would claim none.

"Your insult is undeserved," he said, briefly. "Believe or not, as you will; I have spoken truth, and all the truth. I sought you when my fate was such as all men envied me; it has changed, and I set you free. All I ask is, for the sake of others,—keep these tidings back until to-morrow; and, for yourself, forgive me that I ever——"

His voice broke down; his control forsook him; he loved her, and he thought only of all they would have been, of all they never now could be, to one another; and his heart went out to her in a great resistless longing that shattered pride and forgot injury, and only craved one touch of tenderness, one echo of the fond faith but yesterday so lovingly vowed to him. *He* was not changed: were these accidents of fortune, this visitation of calamity, to make him loathsome where he had been adored?

He stretched out his arms involuntarily.

"For the mercy of God, my love, my *wife!*—for the sake of all we should have been!—speak gentler to me in our wretchedness."

It was the only prayer he ever prayed for pity. In the moment of its entreaty, something softer, some grief more piteous and less absorbed in selfish violence, passed over her face. In the moment of that gesture of beseeching tenderness she could have thrown herself upon his breast and given up the world for him. Trevenna had rightly said she loved as well as *she* could love, and in this instant life asunder seemed a doom too terrible to bear. But the impulse passed swiftly: the weight of the world was heavier and stronger on her than her love for him; he had destroyed her ambitions and had shattered her victory; she knew no thought save for what she deemed her wrong, no grief save for what she deemed her degradation; for her loveliness enshrined a heart of bronze, and her solitary idol was—herself. She stood unmoved, her head turned towards the light with a gesture of scorn, her foot still treading out the bruised fragments of the wasted flowers.

"Claim gentler words when you can prove juster deeds," she said, with a bitterness that seemed to leave her fair lips with the lash of a leaden-weighted scourge. "You have lived one long falsehood in the sight of men; *they* may believe your pleaded ignorance of your bankrupt shame; they have long been your dupes, and *they* may be so still: *I* shall not. The premier offered you your marquis's coronet; go take it! You refused it to my wish; you will accept it to screen you from the claimants of your debts!"

His gaze fastened on her, riveted there by a horrible fascination. Were those eyes, that froze him with so unpitying a hate, the eyes that yesterday had smiled up in his own? were those lips, that

lashed him with such brutal taunts, the lips that yesterday had met his own in their last lingering caress?

His breath came slowly, and drawn with effort, as though life were ebbing out of him.

"Silence! you shame your sex! I thank God that I have known you as you are before my life was cursed with you."

Without another word, he turned and left her,—left her with the crushed blossoms lying beneath her foot, and the summer light upon her loveliness.

CHAPTER IV.

THE LAST NIGHT AMONG THE PURPLES.

THE new opera began.

Fashion was prepared to patronise Genius; happily for Genius it does not do it very often.

The *Ariadne in Naxos* was commenced, and the most brilliant audience of the season glanced in surprise to the empty box of its patron. The grand swell of the overture rolled out, and thrilled through the silent house with a new emotion. Such marvellous poems of sound, such pathetic echoes of sadness, such intense vibrations of passion, such spiritual cadences of thought!—in the creation that had issued from the lonely chamber of suffering, from the dreamy mind of a feeble cripple, there was that which caught the ear of the hearers with a new voice, and spoke to them with a new eloquence. They came to patronise; they stayed to feel!

As the overture closed in the throbbing of the waves of melody that swelled with a mighty thunder through the stillness, into the dazzling light and glitter of the thronged theatre Chandos entered.

The fairness of his face was unusually pale and unusually cold; his eyes had dark shadows under them, and had a singular hectic brilliance; otherwise there was no change.

"Late he is; been drinking," said a person in the stalls, who did not know him.

"Never drinks," said one who did. "Been gambling."

Trevenna, sitting by, set his teeth while he smiled.

"Curse him! he dies game," he thought, while he looked upward to the box as Chandos advanced to the front and stood there for a second, as though blinded with the light; then seated himself in his accustomed chair and leaned slightly forward in full view of the thronged building, where there was scarce a seat in the grand tier but held some titled friend or foreign beauty who knew him familiarly or loved him well. No other noticed that slight pause as he stood with a paralysed, dizzy stupefaction coming into that blaze of radiance and crash of sound,—no one except his foe, who knew all that was suffered in it and all it meant.

There had never been a night in which he had been more c

people's lips, and more in their praise and babble. than he was to-night. Foreigners looked at him eagerly as the man with whose *fêtes* all Paris had rung; strangers had him pointed out to them as the leader of the aristocracy, the former of fashion, the author of "Lucrèce," the owner of Clarencieux. Peeresses wondered at the absence of his betrothed, and spoke of his appearance as the Duc de Richelieu at the princess's fancy-ball,—of his Watteau water-party at his Richmond bijou villa,—of the magnificence of the bridal gifts he had ordered for the Queen of Lilies. Poor men envied him bitterly,—bitterly; and rich men wondered why, with all their wealth, they could not buy his grace, his fame, his popularity. Women who had been loved by him, or had loved him vainly, looked at him, and alone were struck by some vague sense of pain and disquiet at the serenity of his face, at the glitter in the blue depths of the eyes that had ever till now smiled at life with so careless a brilliance.

He sat unmoved. He spoke, listened, acted precisely as he had done on any other of the many nights when he had led the verdict of that house on some new talent; there was not even a tremor in his hand, not even a quiver in his voice. The intense strength of intense agony was lent him for a time; the world-wide desert of desolation that spread around him gave him the desert's arid and passionless calm; he had all the fictitious force, all the mechanical action, of fever. The recklessness of his nature was roused till he could have laughed aloud to think how he sat there, the observed of all eyes, the envied of all men, accredited by the world about him with every gift the gods could give, and knew himself that not a beggar in the streets was poorer, not a homeless dog starving to death more wretched, than he was.

He had not come to play out his terrible comedy from mockery or desperation; he had come because even in his darkest hour he would not forsake the man who was dependent on him, and whose whole future hung on the success which his own presence here alone could be certain to secure. But passing through it for this man's sake, the gigantic gulf that yawned between what he seemed and what he was, the knowledge of what his world thought of him and said of him in this his last night's reign over it, and of the mighty lie that, all unwitting to him, his whole life had been and was, struck on him with the horrible jest which despair oftentimes will seem to itself, and woke in him the desperate laughter with which men of his race had ridden in the old days of warfare down to the ring of spear-heads, down on to a certain death, to laugh still while the life-blood burst forth from a hundred wounds, and the hoofs of trampling chargers broke their bone and tore their nerve.

The music swelled out on the air, rising in aerial cadence and throbbing in eloquent passion, now clear and fresh as a spring bird song, now supreme in its melancholy as the moan of autumn winds through Western forests of pine. Every joy denied him, every hope forbidden him, every smile he sought in vain, every sigh he breathed in suffering, Guido Lulli seemed to have recorded

here. The music was sublime as a song of David, pure as a young child's eyes. It might not throughout be coldly perfect for the ear, but it was far more; it was passionately human for the heart, it was eternally true for every time.

Chandos sat unmoved to the end. To him, though his hand had moulded many of its parts, though his sympathy had cherished it from its earliest birth, though his thoughts had many a time vibrated to its every chord, it was without sense or melody or meaning now; it was like the sound of rushing waters in his ear, —no more. Yet he sat unwavering to the end, and led with an unerring precision the bursts of applause that ever and again rang through the Opera-House.

It closed; the last magnificent chords re-echoed through a dead silence; then, through the thunder of public admiration, the name of Guido Lulli was given for ever to the fame he sought.

Chandos rose and left his box. He went to one, small, obscure, shut wholly away from the sight of the audience; here, alone, Lulli had been placed, shunning the view of the glittering throng, and dreading the notice or the speech of any with the nervous terror of a recluse. He unclosed the door softly. Stretched senseless on the ground he saw the Provençal's form, his hands above his head as he had fallen, in the moment of ecstasy, when for the first time the voices of the world had given him that promise of immortality of which he had so long and vainly dreamed.

Chandos stooped and raised him gently; the movement and the sweep of air from the open doorway roused him from his trance; his eyes unclosed, he looked upward, scarcely conscious still.

"It has triumphed! Ah! I can die so happy!"

The words left the cripple's lips with the sigh so rare in human life,—the sigh of perfect joy.

His gaze, dreamy and distant, like one who sees the visions of the future, wandered back, and knew the features that bent above him. The smile that was like sunlight beamed upon his face; he took his benefactor's hands and kissed them, the great tears coursing down his cheeks.

"Monseigneur, this is your gift! I cannot thank you. What are words? You have given me life, and more than life; you have given me immortality! *I* cannot reward you, but night and day I pray that God may pay my debt."

A smile came on Chandos' lips,—a smile so sad that it might have been either curse or prayer. He stooped over Lulli, and spoke with an infinite gentleness.

"You will be very famous in the years to come. Once or twice remember that I aided something to it. I shall be repaid enough."

And with those words of farewell—a last farewell, though the other knew it not—he left him before the musician could reply.

"You eclipse yourself to-night," said a French princess to him, when, an hour later, his great world, having ordained the triumph

of the opera, came, as they had long been bidden, to an entertainment in celebration of the success of the *Ariadne in Naxos*. "You revive the *fêtes* of our Grand Siècle."

The gardens were lighted with innumerable lamps gleaming among the trees; the winter-garden glanced a very paradise of oriental colour; the wax radiance fell on fairest brows, and the diamonds and sapphires glistened among silkiest hair; the low pleasant murmur of voices filled the chambers; the echoes of music came from the ball-rooms beyond; all the old life that he had known so well, and led so dazzlingly, was about him now for the last time.

As the "thousand great lords" who "drank and praised the gods of gold and silver" at Belshazzar's banquet, while laughter and song echoed through the high halls of Babylon, saw not the foreshadowed doom written on the brow of the lord of the feast, and read not among the jewelled arabesques of the palace-wall the "Mene, Tekel, Upharsin" that rose out to his own sight, so those who came to Chandos to-night saw no sign upon his face, and had no thought that this was a farewell,—a farewell to joy, and peace, and women's love, and the honour of men, and all the gracious gifts and treasures of his life. They did not know. They saw no change in him. He had said in his heart that none should be able on the morrow to recall having noted in him one shadow of pain. The men of his race had always been proud as they were reckless, capable of intense endurance as they were resigned to limitless indulgence; the spirit of his race rose in him now. Throughout this night—a night when such agony was on him as men of stronger will and harder training might have sunk under without shame—he let the world about see no trace that all was not with him as it had ever been. His face was quite colourless, and now and then he lost all sight or sense of where he was; yet he never let a word, a glance, a sigh, escape him which could have told his deadly secret.

One only, mingled among the crowds of princes, peers, and statesmen by right of long-established footing and familiarity, noted the dark gleam in his eyes as of one who defied fate with all the delirious daring of desperation, and knew all that was suffered, all that was suppressed,—and was content.

Once their eyes met, with a swaying cloud of perfumed laces, and delicate hues, and fair faces, and glittering orders, and sparkling jewels, parting them for the breadth of a chamber. It was a strange fellowship between the betrayer and the betrayed, this solitary knowledge of the doom that hung over the house that was now filled with light and melody, and the music of women's voices, and the names of those who controlled nations,—this mutual consciousness alone that as they met now they met for the last time for ever, that when this night should end, with it would end for ever the shadowless life that had been here so long.

To-night was the supreme martyrdom of the one, the supreme triumph of the other.

"Finished at last!" thought the man who had never let go his

vow of vengeance since the summer night long before in his childhood, when he had sworn it at his mother's instance. "All the toil, all the lie, all the envy, all the bitterness and the humiliation, finished for me; all the glory, all the peace, all the fame, all the luxurious ease and the royal pride and the world-wide love, finished for you. After to-night we shall change parts, my proud, beautiful, caressed darling of women,—my careless Chandos of Clarencieux! Ah! what a thing is patience! it sits and weaves so long in the gloom futilely, but it traps at the last. There is only one thing wanting,—if you *would* surrender. But you die like the last Marquis, curse you! you die game through it all!"

Imperceptibly, one by one, the crowd thinned, and left the rooms that had so often and so long seen the most exclusive and the most superb entertainments of the time; they passed away, seeing nothing, dreaming nothing, of the fate that had fallen on the man who thus took his farewell of them, but speaking only, as their carriages rolled away, of the new genius that he had introduced among them, and of the lavish and fantastic royalty of splendour with which his *fêtes* were alway given. The murmur of the voices died away, the strains of the music ceased, the low subdued laughter sank to silence, the glittering throngs dispersed; they left him—his long-familiar friends, companions, and associates—never again to rally round their *roi gaillard*, never again to be summoned at his bidding.

He stood alone,—alone as he must ever be henceforth.

The perfect stillness followed strangely on the movement and melody and radiance of life that had all died out; a clock struck a mournful silvery chime upon the silence, the fall of the water splashed in the fountains; other sound there was none. The light from a million points fell on the clustering colours of the tropic flowers, the drooping fronds of the pale-green palms, the fair limbs of the statues, the deep glow of the paintings: he looked at these things, and knew that from this hour they would be his no more.

To-night for the last time they were his own; when the sun should rise, the fiat would go forth that would scatter them abroad to strangers' hands and enemies' spoil. Henceforth they and he would be divided,—the things that he had gathered and cherished would be scattered broadcast to whoever should choose to buy, —and under the roof that had known him so long his voice would be unheard, his face unseen, his name forgotten, his place behold him no more.

Far behind him, parted from him by an eternal gulf, lay the life of his past, which had been one glad and gorgeous revel, one cloudless and unthinking joy, and which he must now lay down, as the Discrowned whom the Prætorians summoned laid aside golden pomp, and Tyrian purples, and brimming amphoræ, and dew-laden rose-crowns, and went out, unpitied, and alone, to die.

That sweet and cloudless life of his rich past!—to-night he was dethroned and driven out from it for ever; to-night, a living man, he knew all the desolation of death, and in the full glory of his

youth was condemned to the anguish and the beggary of impoverished and stricken age.

To-night he was driven out to exile; and behind him closed for ever were the barred gates of his lost Eden.

CHAPTER V.

THE DEATH OF THE TITAN.

THE Duke of Castlemaine sat in his library in his mighty Abbey of Warburne, whither he had come by his physician's counsels. He was alone; for secretaries and chaplains and stewards were no companions for the superb old Titan of the Regency. His bright blue eyes, so fiery and so eloquent still, were looking outward at the tumbled mass of rock and moorland and giant forest-breadths that made the grandeur of Warburne; his head so stately, though white with eighty winters, was slightly bent; his thoughts were with dead days,—days when his voice rang through the House of Peers or wound its silky way to the hearts of women,—days when he could riot in the wildest orgies through the night, and dictate despatches on which the fate of Europe hung, with a clear brain and a calm pulse, when the morning rose,—days when he had loitered laughing over ladies' supper-tables with half a dozen duels on his hands, and looked in the soft eyes of cloistered Spaniards ere leading his cavalry to the charge,—days when his frame had been iron and his voice magic, when nations were guided by his will, and soft lips had been warm on his own,—days, in one word, of his Youth.

Though in extreme age, the Duke was a greater man yet than those of this generation,—more powerful, more fearless, more full of fine wit, of stately courtesy, of haughty honour. He was of another breed, another creed, another age, than ours,—the age when men drank their brandy where we sip our claret, when men punished a lie with their sword where we pass it over in prudence, when disgrace was washed out with life where we bring it in court and make money of it, when if their morals were more openly lax their honour was more inexorably stringent, when if their revels were wilder their dealing was fairer, and when the same strength which made their orgies fiercer and their blow harder, made their eloquence loftier, their mettle higher, their wit keener, their courage brighter, than our own. And in his extreme grace the Titan was a Titan yet, dwarfing and paling those of weaklier stature and of more timorous breed. He sat there looking out at the brown moors, warm with the golden gorse; and he moved in surprise as the door opened, with a smile of pleasure lighting his eyes.

"*You!* Has an earthquake swallowed the town?"

Even as the first word was spoken, even as his first glance fell on Chandos, he knew vaguely but terribly that some calamity, vaster

than his thoughts could compass, had fallen here, on the man whom he cared for as he cared for no other of his race. This was the only one of his blood who had his own code, his own creed,—the only one in whose companionship he heard the echoes of a long passed age; and he was proud of him, and built mighty hopes on him,—proud of his eminence, of his brilliance, of his successes, proud even of his personal grace and beauty.

Those who loved him as the old Duke loved saw a change on him more ghastly than though they had seen his face set in the colourless calm of sudden death.

Chandos sank down into a seat, and his head fell forward on his arms. The recklessness of desperation, the fever of utter hopelessness, had given him strength to pass through the ordeal of the night before: but here his strength broke down. He knew how the pride of the gallant old man had been centred in him; he suffered for the pain that he must deal, not less than for the misery he bore.

The Duke's mellow voice shook huskily:—

"Tell me in a word! I have never loved suspense."

Chandos did not lift his head; his answer came slowly dragged out, hoarse and faint from exhaustion, excitation, and long want of food and sleep; for he had tasted nothing from the hour that he had learned his fate, and his eyes had never closed.

"I *can* tell you in one word:—ruin!"

The Duke's hand trembled, making the diamonds flash and glitter on the enamel lid; it had never so trembled when it had shaken the dice, though a fortune hung on a throw, when it had lifted a pistol, though a life hung on the shot, when it had pointed to a serried square of Soult's picked troops, though an army hung on the charge.

"Ruin! A wide word. And for whom?"

"For me."

"*You?*"

"Yes! It will amuse the world,—for a week at least. A long time for the absent to be remembered."

A deep oath sprang from the close-shut lips of the old Duke; his face grew white as the hoary silky hair that shaded it, and the diamonds shook and glittered in the tremor of his hand. But he loved the temper that made a jest even of a death-blow; he had seen much of it in his early day; he followed the lead with gallant endurance.

"Ruin for *you?* It is very sudden, is it not? Tell me more: tell me more."

His voice was very faint, but it was steady; he loved the man of whom he heard this thing with the generous love of an age that kept all the warmth and all the fire of his youth; yet they were both of the same school,—they both suppressed all sign of pain as shame. He heard; his head—the head of an Agamemnon—bowed; his hand closed convulsively on the Louis Quatorze toy; his breathing was quick and loud. Once alone he interrupted the recital; it was at Trevenna's name.

"That vile fellow!—I bade you beware of him. He hates you, Ernest."

"It may be. I have almost thought so since—since this. And yet he owes me much,—more than you know."

"Who hate us so remorselessly as those who owe us *anything?*"

"Then are men devils!"

"Most of them. Who doubts it? Did he ever owe you any grudge?"

"None,—only benefits."

"They are the less easily forgiven of the two. Had you any mistress whom this man loved?"

"Never, to my knowledge."

"But you may have had, unknown to you. Whatever for, he hates you, haunts you, envies you ruthlessly; hates you if only because his hands are large and coarse and yours are long and slender!"

"You make him knave and fool in one."

"The combination is not rare. But, pardon me, go on. I will hear more patiently."

He heard very patiently—heard to the end.

His head sank, his breathing grew fast and laboured, the veins swelled on his still fair broad brow, his giant limbs trembled. It was the heaviest blow life had it in its power to deal him.

"Great God! if Philip Chandos had foreseen——"

His voice faltered; his listener stretched out his hand in an involuntary supplication. "In mercy spare me *that!* Do you think *I* have not remembered him?"

"I meant no reproach. You would have heard none from your father's lips. He loved you well; and though you have been improvident, you have not lost all. You have been true to your house: you have saved your honour. Pardon me, Ernest; your news has left me scarcely myself. But—but—must Clarencieux go?"

Where Chandos sat, in the gloom of the mullioned window, the shiver passed over him that had always come there at the name of his idolized inheritance. He could better have borne to part from wealth, and repute, and the love of the world, and the love of woman, than he could bear to part from Clarencieux.

"They say so."

"My God! and *we* cannot help you. Warburne is mortgaged to its pettiest farm. We—of the Plantagenet blood—are beggars! I would give my life to aid you, and I have nothing."

The confession broke from him so low that it barely was above his breath. It was very terrible to the great noble to know that in the dire extremity of the man he loved he could aid him no more than though he were the poorest peasant on his lands.

Chandos looked up; the unnatural coldness and fixity that had set upon the fairness of his face from the moment this calamity had fallen on him softened and changed; his lips trembled; he rose with a sudden impulse, and stooped over the chair, laying his hand tenderly on the old man's.

"Forgive me that I bring this shame and wretchedness upon you. I came here that you might learn it from no other first; not the least bitter of my memories has been the grief that I must entail on you."

The Duke's fingers grasped his hand close, and wrung it hard · no reproach, no rebuke, came from *him;* he could not have raised his voice more than he could have lifted his arm against Chandos in his suffering.

"Do not think of me; I shall live but little time to suffer anything. One question more. She who is to be your wife?"

Chandos moved from him into the shadow that was thrown darkly across the casement by the great cedar-boughs without.

"She is dead to *me*."

Another oath, loud and deep, rattled in his hearer's throat. The haughty patrician could have borne anything sooner than this—that one of his blood should be *forsaken*. Still, no recrimination escaped him; he never said, "*I* warned you!" The grand old pagan of a colossal age, hardened by long combat, and used to the proud supreme dominion of a great chieftainship through such long years of war and of state power, was more merciful to adversity than the young and delicate Lily Queen.

Silence fell between them.

The Duke sat with his white crest bowed and an unusual dimness over the brightness of his Plantagenet eyes; and every now and then the diamonds in the box he held shook with a quick tremor in the sunlight.

"What will you do?" he asked, suddenly, shading his glance with the enamelled box.

"Do!" echoed Chandos, wearily; it seemed to him that his life was ended. "What is there to do? Nothing: except—to end like the last Marquis. An axe on Tower Hill was more dignified, but a dose of laudanum will be as rapid. It would make the best ending for the story for the clubs, and the sales will realize better if their interest be heightened by a suicide!"

The Duke looked hastily up, with that *fin sourire* with which, throughout his career, his Grace of Castlemaine had veiled every deep agitation.

"Well, you would have precedent. You would but do what Evelyn Chandos did after his master's death, you remember? Doubtless it would finish the melodrame well for the world. Still, were I you, I would not. I am an old soldier, and I confess I do not like *surrender*—to fortune or anything else. Your father died in the Commons like a gladiator; I should not like you to die in a ditch like a dog. They would not be meet companion-pictures. Besides, I do not wish to see your grave: I have seen so many!"

Calmly, dispassionately, the old soldier spoke, toying with his Bourbon box. None could have guessed the intense anxiety hidden under that courtly manner, the yearning emotion concealed under that serene smile. Once only his voice shook; he had seen the graves of so many—of the friends of his youth, of his brothers in council, of the comrades who had fought and fallen beside him,

of the women who had lain in his bosom and smiled in his eyes—he had seen so many!

Chandos knew his meaning,—knew all that was veiled under the gracious courtesy, the gentle smile; those brief and tranquil words to him bore an unspeakable eloquence—an eloquence which moved him as no insult, no indignity, no adversity, had power to move him.

Where he stood, he bowed low, very low, till his head was stooped and his lips touched the aged noble's hand.

"You are right, and I thank you. Have no fear; your words shall be remembered. Whatever my fate is, I will accept it and endure it."

The Duke looked upward at him.

"I am glad," he said, almost faintly. "*Contre fortune bon cœur.* Pardon me if I intrude my counsels: it is the privilege of Nestors to prose. You go now. I shall see you again."

"Surely. Before I go, forgive me."

The Duke's eyes, so blue, so fiery still, dwelt on him with a great unuttered tenderness; and the tones that had used to ring like a clarion down the battle-fields were gentle as a woman's.

"I have nothing to forgive. Had you loved and served yourself as you have loved and served others, it would not be thus with you now."

Then they parted, never to meet again.

The old man sat listening to the last echo of his footsteps; then, with a slight sigh, he leaned back in his arm-chair, his hand relaxed its clasp upon the jewelled box, a weariness came over him new to his nerve of steel, a mist stole before his eyes, shutting from his sight the flickering leaves and the purple moorlands and all the light and movement of the forest-world.

The summer light quivered through innumerable boughs, young fawns played in the warmth, white clouds drifted over sunny skies, and a nest-bird above in the cedar's branches sang low and softly, as though not to break the rest of the sleeper within. And the Duke still leaned back in his ebony chair, with a slight smile about his lips, and the diamonds flashing in the box that was lying at his feet.

The golden day stole onward, the shadows lengthened, the birds sought their roost, and the young fawns their couches; the peace of evening brooded on the earth, all things were at rest, and so was he; for he still sat there, motionless and with the jewels gleaming at his feet.

The sunset faded, and the twilight came, the purple haze upon the moorlands deepening to night. Still he sat there, while the shadows stole the brilliance from the diamonds and softly veiled his face, as though in reverence. And when some of his wide household, who were so nigh, yet whom he could not lift his hand to summon, dared to venture at length unbidden to his presence, they found him thus; and a great awe fell on them, and the hush

of a breathless dread; for they knew that they were standing in the presence of Death.

The last of a race of Titans had died, as well became him, in silence and alone, without a sign, and with a smile upon his lips.

CHAPTER VI.

"AND THE SPOILERS CAME DOWN."

It was night at Clarencieux.

In the Greuze cabinet, Chandos leaned against the high carved marble of the mantel-piece; his chest was bowed as with the weight of age; he breathed heavily, and with each breath pain; his face was white as the sculpture he rested on, and set into that deadly calm which had never left him when in others' sight. The tidings of the Duke's death had reached him some days, and had filled up the measure of his anguish, adding to it the torture of a passionate regret, of an eternal remorse. He had loved the grand old man from whose fearless, fiery eyes no glance but one of kindness and of gentleness had looked on him from his earliest childhood; and he knew that the shock of his own ruin had slain the mighty strength of the old noble, if ever grief killed age.

He stood alone; his heart seemed numb and dead with misery; he gave no sign of emotion; no tears had ever come into his eyes since the hour in which his fate fell on him. The nights had passed pacing sleepless to and fro his chamber, or heavily drugged to rest with opium; the days had passed almost fasting, and in an apathy that awed those about him with a vague terror lest his end should be in the vacant gloom of madness. He was self-possessed, self-controlled; he answered tranquilly, he heard patiently; but there was that in this mechanical action, this unnatural serenity, that had a more horrible dread for those who saw him than all the ravings of delirium, all the passion of grief, could ever have had.

The door unclosed. John Trevenna entered.

"They are all here."

Chandos bent his head, and followed him out of the chamber. They who waited were his creditors.

In a day, with the rush of hell-hounds let out of leash, and as though at a given unanimous signal, his claimants had poured and pressed in on him, baying with one tongue for their one quarry,—money. He had bidden them all meet here, and they had come without one missing,—a strange gathering for the halls of Clarencieux, where kings had used to find their surest shelter, and courts had been entertained through Plantagenet and Elizabethan and Stuart days.

They were collected in the great banqueting-hall; a mob of more than a hundred men,—men who had come down on the same errand, in the same temper, sullen yet eager, defiant yet suspicious,

savage yet audacious,—men who had no mercy on a dethroned royalty, and who had no sight save for the deficit they pushed to claim. Still even on them the solemn and venerable beauty of Clarencieux had a quieting spell. As they had entered, their voices unconsciously had sunk lower, their gait involuntarily had grown less swaggering; and as they stood now, counting with greedy eyes the worth and magnificence of the banqueting-room, a silence had fallen on them.

"Feels a'most like a church," whispered one, a picture-dealer, as he looked down the vista of the double porphyry columns.

As he spoke, Chandos entered.

He bowed to them with a grave and courteous grace; all had their hats on, even those better bred, from the sense of scorn in which they held a debtor, and for the sake of vaunting and of claiming their own superiority. Involuntarily, as they saw him, they uncovered in respectful silence, the Jew Ignatius, who represented the bill-discounting firm, alone remaining the exception. Trevenna's eye had glanced at him as his hand went to his velvet cap, and his arm had dropped as though paralysed.

In the stillness Chandos advanced up the hall, his eyes resting unmoved on the strange and motley group that filled with their uncomely forms, and with almost every type of European nationality, the porphyry chamber where king and prince and peer had used to sit, his guests and his boon friends. There was not a murmur, not a whisper, raised; there was that in his look which held the coarsest, the greediest, the most pitiless, silent.

He stood beside the statue of his father, and turned towards them. He was at the upper end of the porphyry hall, and the multitude faced him in the glow of the lights that were illumined there.

"Gentlemen," he said, calmly, with a tremor in his voice, though it was faint as after long illness, "I have but a few words to say to you. You are here to enforce your claims. Of any one of those claims I was in ignorance a few days since, but I dispute none of them; the improvidence of my life has left me no title to do so. You will doubt me, perhaps, when I say I never knew I owed a single debt; yet such is the truth."

There was a stir among the crowd, restless, pained, yet curious; they could not tell the meaning of this, yet they were stirred with a singular awe and wonder. One voice, the picture-dealer's, rough yet cordial, broke the silence:—

"We believe you! damned if we don't! You ha'n't got a face what lies!"

Chandos bent his head in silent acknowledgment.

"For the rest," he continued, still with that unchanged tranquillity, "I have but little to add. The amount of your claims on me is, in the aggregate, sufficient to wreck fortunes ten times larger than mine has been; yet, as I understand, you can be paid in full by my entire surrender of all that I possess. This surrender I make; my lawyers will explain its value better than I can do. I resign everything unconditionally to you; it has become no longer

mine, but yours. I believe there will be enough to satisfy you to the uttermost farthing."

The murmur rose deeper and louder in the hall: the mass of men swayed together as though stirred by a universal impulse. They had come prepared to bully, to bluster, to demand, to enforce, and they were disarmed. Moreover, as he stood against the statue, they remembered the fame of Philip Chandos; the coarsest among them felt a pang of shame that his only son should be standing thus before them now.

They looked at one another; they could not comprehend this man who voluntarily came and laid down all his possessions at their feet, and yet in their own rough way they understood him; they would fain now have sympathised with him had they known how. The picture-dealer—a rude, broad boar, who was worth near a million, and whose claims were the largest of any there, save the Jew's—pressed himself forward again, and spoke what all there felt, spoke with a genuine emotion in his harsh voice, with a mist before his sharp and eager eyes:—

"Sir, you're a gentleman, and have behaved like one. We thank you, all on us. If we'd a' known, we'd a' waited,—ay, bless you, we would; but that a'n't here nor there. Your father was a great man, but damned if I don't think you're a greater; and if there's any little matter—any picter', or that like—that you set particular store on, say the word, and it shall be kept for you, or I'll know the reason why."

"Spoke up right well, Caleb! hear, hear!" muttered another; and the applause was echoed and murmured down the whole body of the hall, till even the fashionable tradesmen, who had heard and had looked on supercilious and impassive, were moved by it, and joined it.

Chandos bowed his head again.

"I thank you for your good will, and for the belief you give me. I will leave you now. My men of business will conclude all arrangements with you, and my servants will bring you refreshments here. For your offer, there is nothing I would claim. I have said I give up all; but if there be any surplus left, I will ask you to do me the favour to sink it in an annuity for one who has been long dependent upon me, and whose health can never let him be as other men are: I mean the musician, Guido Lulli."

A profound silence followed on his words,—the silence of supreme astonishment. He might have taken advantage of their offer to ask anything, and he thought only of providing for a foreign cripple!

Caleb, the dealer, broke the stillness as before, dashing his hat down on the mosaic with a stormy oath.

"I wore that hat afore you;—I'd sooner uncover to you than to all the kings. Lulli shall be took care of; *I'll* go bail for that."

Chandos turned with that royal grace which had made him the darling of courts, and could never leave him while he had life, and silently stretched out his hand—the delicate patrician hand which his foe had hated—to the rough, uncleanly, hairy palm of the dealer. Then, with a bow to the standing multitude, he passed

out of the porphyry chamber; and they made way for their debtor as men make way for monarchs.

The Israelite Ignatius smothered a sigh in his patriarchal beard.

"Agostino was right. It is worse than murder!" he thought.

Trevenna ground his teeth, baffled even in the sweetness of his utter victory.

"Curse him! Do what you will, you can't *lower* him!" he mused.

Caleb, the dealer, stood curiously looking at and touching with a sort of wonder his own tough broad right hand.

"He shook it, he did," he murmured; "and they call him as proud as the devil. He warn't above taking it. Damn me if it shall ever do so much dirty work agen!"

A few hours later, Trevenna re-entered the Greuze cabinet.

Chandos sat alone before the still-opened window; there was even now no light, except the pale radiance of the moon, in which the fair women of the French painter lost life and colour, and smiled a deathly smile. His head was drooped forward; his eyes fixed on the moonlit forest and river scenes beyond. In his hand was the tube of a great Eastern narghilé, and the smoke that curled from it was suffocating in its perfume; it was the smoke of opium. Thus, hour after hour of night or day, in solitude, he would sit and gaze out at the lands he had lost, and strive to steep his senses and his agony in the insensibility of the nicotine.

Trevenna called him by his name; he did not raise his head nor give a sign of knowledge; he sat, bent forward, looking dreamily out at the night-world of dew-laden grasses, and mighty forests bathed in starlight, and dark skies with wreathing mists of white summer vapour, and beyond all, the silver line of the calm sea.

Trevenna touched him on the shoulder; then he raised his eyes; there was in them so senseless, so sightless a look of intolerable pain, yet almost utter unconsciousness, while, dilated by the opiate, the pupils were twice their natural size, that the man who had pursued him might well have thought his pursuit would end in the chambers of a madhouse.

"Chandos, can't you hear me?"

"Hear!" he echoed wearily. "Shall I *never* have heard all? What more can there be?

"What more? Then have you no heed as to what becomes of Clarencieux?"

Trevenna saw the shudder, which always passed over him at the name, shake him from head to foot.

"No heed? *I!*"

In the stifled words there was a piteous anguish that might have moved his torturer to mercy, were not the man who hates a blood-hound whom no death-struggles will sate till the last drop of life-blood has ebbed out.

"Well, it must go. The men are in a good mood; you have pleased them mightily; and it's a great pity when you had the

offer that you didn't clinch it, and ask 'em straight off for the Clarencieux diamonds. I do believe you might have had them. Englishmen are such almighty fools when they once get soft and sentimental! Still, though they've taken such a fancy to you, they won't do without their money. Park Lane must go, and Clarencieux must go!"

"Why come to tell me this? You heard me. I gave them all."

Trevenna shrugged his shoulders.

"*Très-cher*, you did. It was just as well to give it them with a good grace, seeing that they would assuredly have taken it. But the point that concerns Clarencieux is, how will it go? It *may* go by private contract, if they're all of one mind,—which no set of Britons ever was yet; if not, it goes by public auction."

Chandos drew his breath with a sharp contraction. Despite the dull, heavy, half-drunk stupor of the opium, each one of these phrases quivered through him with a fearful force.

"And if it go by public auction, they will divide it."

"Divide it!"

The echoed words were hollow and inarticulate; a fresh misery faced him. He knew that he and his home must part, that strangers must rule in his father's heritage, and that the place he loved must see his face no more; but he had never thought that his heritage could be parcelled out and severed among the spoilers, and scattered north and south, east and west.

"Yes,—divided."

The certain vulgarity which had always underlaid the tone of Trevenna's manner, though his scholarly culture had counterbalanced it, and his familiarity with good society almost effaced it, came out now almost unconsciously to himself, as he stood on the hearth, with the careless insolence of a coarse temper to adversity, and addressed, with a roughness he had never dared to use, the man who now had no power and no title in the home that had so long called him master.

"*You* won't be consulted, you know; it's theirs now, and of course they'll go the best way to work to make money by it. We can't help that: wish we could! It will bring most so, sold in lots. The Castle will go with the Home Park, of course; some millionaire will buy it, very likely, just as it stands, furniture, pictures, and all; or else, they say, it may be bought by Government for a new military hospital. I don't know about that myself; but some say so. The rest will go in lots; the forests will fetch no end for timber; those oaks and elms are worth any money for ship-building and railway carriages. The deer-park they'll turn into a sheep-walk, kill the herds, and drain the land; and all that waste part by the sea, so pretty to look at, you know, and worth just nothing at all for agriculture, they'll sell for building purposes. All that rock, and gorse, and moor, and pine-wood, will tell uncommonly well in an auctioneer's periods. The air's beautiful, the sea runs right up under the trees. It will take the public mightily as a bathing-place. I'll be bound in ten years' time villas will

cover the whole sea-line, and hotels will be cropping up among the firs like mad. A company's sure to dart at it."

For his life he could not restrain the merciless jocularity; it was so delicious to him to stand there and parcel out by his words the magnificent demesne he had longed so savagely to see sold to the Egyptians and divided among the thieves, as the sons of Jacob longed to tear the many-coloured coat in rags, and sell the favourite of Israel into bondage.

Chandos standing where he had risen, heard in silence.

"Best thing that can be done with it for you," went on Trevenna, standing at ease there, with his hands behind his back, and in his whole attitude the insolence of a coarse triumph more legibly spoken than he knew. "There *may* be a surplus if it sell well, and of course that will come to you. I don't think there can be much; but still something, ever so little, if it's only just as much as you used to give for an actress's bracelet, of course we shall be glad if we can save for you now. I suspect the building idea will be very profitable; there are always such a lot of builders ready to rush at a new place; and when the villas spring up like mushrooms, and the lodging-houses grow thick, I shouldn't be surprised if Clarencieux beats Ventnor. By Jove! what would the last Marquis have said if he'd foreseen bricks and mortar invading his mighty Druidic woods?"

Still Chandos said nothing; his eyes never left their gaze at Trevenna, but there was rising in them darker and darker that look which the Hanoverian nobles had seen in the eyes of the last Marquis when he had sent them from his Tower cell, with a single syllable, like lashed curs.

"But what I came to ask you, my dear Chandos," pursued his tormentor, "was, What will you do? What is your future to be?"

Still no word of answer.

"You must do something," continued Trevenna, with a kick to the silver andirons. "You have not the worth of one of those firedogs now. You chose 'honour.' Now, honour don't give us bread and cheese. It's quite a patrician luxury, and I can assure you you'll never get your salt out of it. There a'n't anything the world pays so badly; you see, there a'n't any demand for it! What's to be done? To be sure, you write; but now you're down in the world, I'm sadly afraid your books will go down in the world too, and I shouldn't be at all surprised if the critics find you immoral. They always do, unless a writer gives 'em good dinners; they always shy that stone, unless their hands are filled with a claret-jug. Besides, as Scott says, 'literature's a good crutch, but a sorry staff,' unless you cant in it; and I don't suppose you'd ever cant, not if you were living on a loaf in a garret?"

Still there was no answer to him; only the gleam in his dilated eyes grew blacker as Chandos heard.

"Literature, of course, you can turn back to," resumed Trevenna, too appreciative of the satisfaction he enjoyed, and too absorbed in his ingenuity at stretching every pulley, and turning

every screw of the rack he had his prey stretched on, to note how dangerous a pastime he had chosen. "But I fear you won't be much able to write at present. Forgive me if I speak bluntly. I mean well. What remains? You can say with truth, if ever anybody could, 'I cannot work, to beg I am ashamed.' To be sure, the country—the Cabinet—would give you some post, perhaps, out of respect to the great minister's name; but, on my life, unless it's to choose pictures for the nation, or to preside over a competitive examination of pretty women for the palm of beauty, I don't know any public office for which you've trained! You're an Epicurean, and there's no room for Epicureans in these busy, practical days. Your pride, your pococurantism, your art-fancies, your fashionable caprices, were thought charming by the world, my dear Ernest, while you were rich and were its idol; but I am sadly afraid, now that you're a sold-up bankrupt, the world won't care to give you back your very good dinners, and will tell you, like Job's friends, that the best thing you can do to please them is to 'curse God and die.'"

He had gone one step too far. As the lion-tamer amuses himself with goading and insulting the fallen monarch that lies chained before him, till he forgets that the desert-blood is still there, and in incautious insolence tampers and stings one moment too long, until the captive king, with a single leap, clears his barrier and breaks his bonds, and avenges his injuries with the old desert-might, so Trevenna had played for one moment too protracted with the man he tortured. With a spring light and long as a deer's, unerring and irresistible as a leopard's, Chandos threw himself on him, one hand grasping his shoulder, the other twisted tight in the linen at his throat, and silently, with a resistless force, strong as steel to clasp, thrust him downward across the painted cabinet towards the door, his height above the low square form of Trevenna like a Greek god's above a faun's.

"To-night at least this house is mine. If it were not that I have benefited you, you should not leave it with your life,—you traitor, who sold your friend!"

The door closed, barring him out. He rose livid with rage, and passionately bitter that in one moment of thoughtless self-indulgence he should have undone the caution and the acumen of so many years, and betrayed the carefully veiled secret of his hate. Yet, as he shook himself, jarred but unbruised by the fall on the yielding velvet carpets, he smiled in a contemptuous triumph, a compensative satisfaction: he had what life could never take from him,—his vengeance.

"The last exercise of your *droits de seigneur*, my beggared Lord of Clarencieux," he thought, content, though angered at himself. "You won't find any one put up with your pride now. You are bitter; yes, I dare say you are bitter; but all your misery won't prevent this haughty castle going to the hammer, and one day or other you shall see *me* in it! When I do come, I'll light my first fire with my Lord Marquis's Kneller picture, and I'll build my kennels with the pounded dust of Philip Chandos' statue!"

CHAPTER VII.

THE FEW WHO WERE FAITHFUL.

THE morning came,—a beautiful summer morning, with its light on the sea, and its west wind blowing over the limitless blossoms of acres on acres of lilies-of-the-valley and of wild dog-roses that filled the forest-glades with fragrance and made their dewy couches for the deer and their perfumed shelter for the earth-nesting birds. The earliest rays glancing in to the painted cabinet found Chandos sitting there as he had sat all the night through; he had never stirred: now and then his head had sunk forward on his breast, and the sleep of the opiate had fallen on him for an hour, heavy, dreamless, merciful, insomuch as it annihilated thought; at all other times he sat motionless, save once or twice when he drank off great floods of iced water or brimming draughts of brandy, looking outward at all he loved so passionately,—at all he had lost for ever.

With that single roused action towards his traitor, all revival of sense or movement seemed to have ebbed out again in him. He sat dulling his senses to insensibility with the nicotine, but never dulling with it the pangs that ate at his heart, as the vulture at Prometheus'.

He never noticed the rising of the day, he never saw the sun grow brighter and higher in the east; he knew nothing; his eyes only fastened with a look that never left them on the sea and the woodland, and all the forest beauty that had been his so long, that never now would be his own again. Couched at his feet the dog Beau Sire lay, stirless through the day and night, lifting his head now and then with a low moan; the brute was faithful where the hand he had filled with gifts and benefits numberless as the sands of the sea had turned against him.

All was very still. Trevenna, with the creditors and lawyers, had left in the past night; the men whom they placed in charge had been enjoined to show the strictest respect for his privacy. The household were dumb and paralyzed with amazement and with grief; none of them dared venture near him. Nothing roused him from his stupor.

As the noon was high, and the sunlight without shadow across the breadths of grass-land in the hush in which the song-birds ceased, and even the busy wild pigeons rested on the wing, the slow sullen tramp of the steps of many men came on the stillness, echoing dully on the road of the western avenue that swept round by the western wing in which the Greuze room was. The solid, measured beating of the many feet did not awake him from his apathy of drugged unconsciousness; the noise of the irregular marching of varied steps as they crushed the ground beneath the woven boughs of the arched aisles of beech and chestnut did not reach his ear. The men came on to pass round the castle to the

front; they were men of all ages and of different ranks, but well-nigh all of the same type, the type of the two classes of Old England whom she never hears the name of now:—the yeomen and the peasantry; the fair, florid, blue-eyed, broad-shouldered, bull-dog type of what were once her franklins and her eorlmen, that now—here and there fast fading out—are still her tenant-farmers and her country cotters, still reap her yellow harvests, and still live in the green shadow of her woods.

They came on very slowly, their heads bent, their heavy steps dragging with a weary, melancholy effort. They came as they had followed the bier of Philip Chandos, as they would have followed the funeral of his son.

They had learned that a worse thing than death had fallen on Clarencieux. They moved with a certain solemnity and dignity, rough and various as the men were in person and degree; for one emotion was upon them all, and a profound grief lent its sanctity, almost its majesty, to the weather-beaten faces on which the warmth of the early summer shone down through the leaves, and to the stalwart stature and the bent frames which were side by side as age and youth, as the tenant of thousands of acres and the peasant who lived in a shieling, advanced together in a long line up the double avenue.

At their head, walking alone, was a very old man of more than eighty-five years; his form gnarled and tough as one of the oaks of the deer-forest; his white hair on his shoulders like one of the patriarchs of Israel; his face tanned to a ruddy brown, that no near approach of death could pale. He leaned heavily on an elm staff, and the lines in his still-comely face were deep-set as though his own plough had riven them.

As they paced near, the loud swelling noise of their marching smote dully on the hushed noontide. At last it reached the ear of Chandos; he raised his head, heavy with the opium-fumes, and saw them. He knew them, every man of them; he had known them from the earliest moment when every creature on the broad lands of Clarencieux had striven with all the loving loyalty of feudal affection to do their best to please and to amuse the golden-haired young child of the great house of Clarencieux.

"Oh, my God!" he moaned aloud; "and they must suffer too!"

Not alone could he bear his burden; not alone could his fate strike him; it would crush others in his fall, remove the landmark of the fatherless, drive out the old man from his life-long hearth, send the worn-out peasant from the cottage hearthstone that had been his so long, and fell the green, glad welcome of the forests that the fathers' fathers of the most aged there had known and loved as familiar and venerable things.

He had thought of them before, thought often of all who must suffer through him; of the retainers made homeless in their old age; of the tenants given over to hard hands; of the men who had lived on those lands from their birth, like their fathers before them, condemned to see their roof-trees sold before their sight,

and to be driven across the western seas to seek new homes, when they had had no other wish save to be laid in peace beside their people in the familiar graves beneath their village spire. He had thought of them; no pain could make him selfish; but he had never thought of them as he thought now, when the three hundred south-countrymen who held his fiefs, large or small, came up in the noontide through the western avenue.

Involuntarily he rose; they saw him, and paused before the opened casement on the broad stretch of turf, all checkered with the shadows of the crossed branches. The oriels reached nearly to the ground; he was as much in their presence as though they had entered the building, and that which they came to say seemed best spoken under the summer freedom of the sky. With the same unanimous movement as his creditors, they uncovered to a man, standing with as much reverence before the ruined bankrupt as they had stood before the Lord of Clarencieux. The sun shone clear upon his face, and at what they read there—the change so unutterable that a few days had sufficed to work—they were silenced with as unspeakable a horror. They knew then that this thing of which they had heard was true.

The old man who stood at their head advanced slightly. He was their spokesman, who had rented and farmed the greenest lands of Clarencieux, and had lived under the same broad thatch-roof as his ancestors had dwelt under since days beyond their memory, when the Chandos had been peers, and had marched with their brother barons to win at the sword's point the chartered liberties of England. He was a brave and staunch old patriarch, holding himself proudly as any Saxon thane, yet loyal to the house he loved, as the Chandos had been loyal to their Plantagenet kinsmen and to their Stuart kings.

He—by name Harold Gelart—stood forward, his white hair floating in the soft west wind.

"My lord" (the owner of Clarencieux had been their lord to all the yeomen on the lands since that unforgotten, unforgiven day when the Hanover boor had slaughtered in cold blood their last Marquis), "my lord, is this thing true?"

Harold Gelart could not have put into clear words the shame and misery which he had heard had come to Clarencieux.

Chandos bowed his head.

The dense throng gathered under the leafy shadow of the elms moved with a shuddering, swaying motion. Against all witness they had disbelieved it till they should hear its utterance from his own lips Its blow to him was scarcely less than was its blow to them.

The old farmer bent over his elm staff as though the shock that had been so deadly to him in the past night, smote him afresh.

"Will the lands be sold?"

His voice was hoarse, and panted slowly out, and he covered his face as he asked it. To him it was such unutterable shame, such insupportable disgrace, to speak such words to their beloved and honoured favourite.

Chandos bowed his assent once more.

Speech would not come to him, and none was needed as they looked upon his face.

They were strangely, terribly still,—that mass of toil-worn, air-freshened, stalwart men, whose strength could have wrecked Clarencieux from terrace to turret, had they hated its beauty with Trevenna's hate. What they heard might drive any or all of them out to new homes, might consign them to new and pitiless dealers, might level the homesteads they cherished, and might ruin them in many fatal and unlooked-for ways. But in this moment it was not of themselves they thought; it was for the great house that had fallen,—for the dispossessed lord who stood before them.

Harold Gelart, the oldest among them, and elected their ambassador, a man of few words, tough in his mould as any oak that stood the shock of the sea-storms, yet tender at heart as any sapling fresh in its first green leaf, lifted his head, while great drops welled slowly out of his aged eyes and down the sunburnt furrows of his face.

"If it had pleased the Almighty God to have laid me in my grave before this day!"

It was the only moan that escaped the brave old yeoman. The honour of his "lords" had been his honour, their fame his fame; loyalty to them had been one, in his simple creed, with loyalty to his God; and though he knew not but that the old moated ivy-hidden grange, where he and his had dwelt so long in peace, might be sold above his head and new landlords eject him to find a fresh resting-place in his last years, no syllable would ever have escaped him to add a blow to the misery that had fallen upon Clarencieux.

Chandos looked at him, and at the crowd that gathered so mutely under the elms; and the icy, stony rigidity, the almost senseless stupor, which had been upon his features, changed and softened as it had done at the dead Duke's words. He had known those furrowed, bronzed faces ever since his youngest years; he had seen them gather round him in loyal attachment on every anniversary of his birth, at every return to his home, at every Christmas-tide that he had been among them. They were familiar to him as the venerable trees beneath which they stood; and he knew that they and he met for the last time.

"My friends," he said gently, "the worst that you can hear is true. You and I must part,—for ever. I hope that my fate may not recoil on you; but it is too likely you may suffer through me. I have been blind and mad. Forgive me that I thought too little of all I owed my heritage."

The words reached the farthest that stood on the outskirts of the throng, hollow and feeble though the once rich music of his tones was now. A single sound, like one deep, vast sob, shook the crowd as they heard. They loved him well for his own sake, for his father's sake, for the sake of his great name and race, that had been part and share of their own honour for so long.

Harold Gelart lifted his white head, like the head of a Saxon

franklin, and spoke with the broad, marked dialect of the southern sea-board steeping his words in its accent.

"My lord, we aren't here to reproach of you; you have done what you will with your own. We are come to tender you our loyalty, to say a few words to you, an' you will."

The old patriarch, whose life was spent amidst the woods and fields, whose rising and going to rest were with the larks of his corn-lands, found words with difficulty. His speech was ever laconic, and little above a peasant's; and the most silver-tongued orator would have found utterance hard under such grief as that he choked down now.

"Speak on," said Chandos, gently still. He knew that, bitterly as they tortured him, they came there out of love for him.

"My lord, it is just this,—no more," said the old man; while the broad provincialism of his county-tone gave a rough, imploring earnestness, beyond all oratory, to his words. "You tell us the lands must go; we have heard yesternight that a sore and wicked thing have befell you: it don't need to speak on it, it's too bitter in all our teeth; and them as has wrought it on you, may the vengeance of God overtake!"

Chandos stayed him with a gesture.

"No! to pray that were to call a curse on me. I but reap the harvest of my own utter madness."

Harold Gelart's eyes flashed with a fire that age could not wholly dim, and he struck his elm staff down into the turf with mighty force.

"Where be them that never warned you? Where be them that feasted at your cost? Where be them that knew all was rotting under you, and never spoke the word that might have saved you in good time? Where be *them?* Let their guilt find them out!"

There was a rude grandeur in the passionate imprecation, as the old man raised his head and looked upward at Clarencieux, where the colossal walls towered above him, as though marking the vengeance of the great dead who had reigned there. Then he turned his eyes on Chandos.

"I ask pardon, my lord; I feel dazed-like with the misery! What we come to say to you is only this. We hear a power of money is wanted: if the money was forthcoming any other way, the lands would be safe? We fancy so; we don't know much; but we guess that. Now, we aren't rich men, none of us; but put together, we're worth summat. We've saved a good bit, most of us; and, clubbed together, it will make a bigger sum than may-be anybody'd think. Now, my lord, we don't mean no offence; we've lived under you and yours all our lives, and we love you like as if you was our king. Now, will you let us pay the money? We'll clear the lands, anyhow; we'll clear summat, at least as far as it'll go. We'll give every penny we can scrape together; and we'll bless you for using of it, as we used to bless your father's name when, let state and grandeur load him ever so, he never forgot *us*. Take it as we give it, right down with all our hearts; there a'n't a man among us but what would go content, and feed

with his dogs, and fodder with his cattle, to know that he'd been of ever such a littlest bit of help in saving you and saving Clarencieux!"

Harold Gelart paused,—his voice shaken and stifled; the drops streaming unbidden, like a woman's, down his withered cheeks, in the passionate earnestness his errand lent him. Never, in all the years of his tough, sun-tanned, wind-beaten, healthy, vigorous life, had such a weakness been wrung from him.

From the yeomen and peasant-throng a murmur came such as that which the speech of the dealer had roused in the porphyry chamber, but louder, bolder, rough, and honest, with the simple warmth of those who gave it. It was the ratification by every man present of the words and of the offer of their spokesman. Every man there bent his head, as they bent it entering their woodland church: so, silently, they registered their adhesion to his promise.

Chandos stood and heard. A strange alteration passed over his face; all its frozen calm changed; for the first time since the night that he had learned his doom, the blood rushed back in a hot flush over his features; he quivered through all his frame, as if they had struck him some heavy-weighted physical blow. He was silent.

At his silence, the throng stretching far away under the elm-glades before him, serged nearer by one impulse; every unit of that swaying mass pressed forward to pledge his sincerity and the willingness of his gift, and from their throats, to a man, one shout broke:

"My lord! take it,—take it, and buy back the lands! What is ours is your'n!"

"Ay, ay!" swore the staunch old Gelart, while with his brown, horny hand he dashed back the salt from his lids. "And only just reckoning, too. What was your'n have been ever free to us in your days and in your forefathers'; no soul was ever pressed, no soul ever hungered, no soul ever pined, on these lands. What is ours is your'n."

Chandos was silent still. The change on his face grew softer, warmer, better, with each moment; the vacant lethargy of the opiate cleared more and more away from his senses; but his head was sunk upon his chest, and for the first time since his ruin had been known to him tears gathered in his eyes and fell slowly one by one. The loyalty showed to him, moved him as insult and as anguish had had no power to do; the rain of those bitter tears saved him from madness.

He stood back in the shadow, so that his face was concealed from them; the weakness he could not for the instant control wrung his pride, and wrung his heart; with the warmer gratitude and emotion that their generous fealty brought him was blent the shameful misery that he—the last Chandos of Clarencieux—should ever stand thus before the tenants of his lands. Their love touched him with an intense pain that he should ever have tried and proved it thus.

They mistook his silence, and the movement with which he involuntarily drew back into the gloom of the Greuze chamber, for

offence; and their spokesman, Gelart, pressed nearer, laying hold of the oak framework of the oriel.

"My lord, it sounds bold and coarse, may-be, as I puts it, for we to come bringing our money to you, but it a'n't *meant* so; we come out o' love and loyalty to you,—just out o' that. Your house have been our glory and our friend; we can't a-bear to see it fall and not to heave a shoulder to its prop. Leastways, my lord. if you'll just let us save the lands: we sha'n't be a-doing it for you; we shall only be let to save ourselves from new masters,—nothing more. The charity'll be to us."

The old yeoman was rude in speech and tough in fibre, but a true inherent delicacy lived in him for all that; he strove, as far as his powers could, to put the service they came to render in the guise of a service permitted them to aid themselves.

Chandos came forward, and took the old man's brown hands in his, and pressed them silently: words were very hard to him to utter then.

"My friends," he said, unsteadily, while his voice vibrated on the quiet of the sunny summer day, "thank you, I cannot; such service as you would render me is not to be recompensed by any gratitude. If I could take a debt from any man, I would take one from you. But were I to stoop so low as to rob you of your earnings to arrest my ruin, you would be right to deny that I could ever be the son of Philip Chandos."

A perplexed, piteous pain cast its shadow over the honest, ruddy faces upon which he looked: some perception of his meaning, some sense that could he take their offer he would be no longer what the men of his race had ever been, stole on them. They would have given their lives for him in that hour; and they had some faint knowledge that he was right,—that his acceptance of what they tendered, in all the cordial singleness of their hearts, would stain the man they came to save, more deeply than his calamity.

Old Gelart lifted his eyes.

"Master, master," he whispered, hoarsely, "it would be to save *his* name, *his* lands. I think he'd 'a' let us do it."

The yeoman had been of the same years with the great minister, and had loved and honoured him with all a vassal's feudal strength.

Chandos shivered at his words.

"No," he said, gently,—though in his voice there was an accent that pierced the hearts of the listening crowd. "I have dishonoured him enough: as I have sown so I reap: it must be so. Yet, because I refuse you, do not think me dead to all your love, —senseless to all your fidelity. We shall never meet again; but to my dying day I shall never forget you,—never cease to honour and to thank you."

A mighty sob, like the wrung-out moan of a giant, shook the whole throng like one man. They had heard from his own voice the fiat of farewell; they had learned from his own lips that the doom of Clarencieux was sealed, that they and the race they honoured would be severed for evermore.

They looked upon his face in as eternal a parting as the strong, bold men who had dwelt upon his lands and fought under his standard, had looked upon the face of the last Marquis when he had ridden forth to join the rallying,—ridden forth never to return.

And they wept sorely, like women.

The length of the summer hours passed, the shadows of the clouds sweeping over the breezy uplands, the swathes of scythed grass, the golden gorse of the moors sloping to the sea, and the swelling woods of the deer-forests. A fairer day had never dawned and closed on Clarencieux. Far in the distance a white sail glided in the offing; the stags couched slumbering under the umbrageous shelter of the greenwood aisles; the brooks murmured their incessant song of joy, bubbling through the maiden-hair and beneath the wild-rose boughs: its beauty had never been more beautiful.

Like the youth whom the ancient Mexican world decked with roses, and led out in his loveliness in the light of the sun, ere the knife of the priestly slaughterer laid his dead limbs to be severed on the altar of sacrifice, the lands stretched smiling in the warmth, unshadowed by the doom that would dismember and destroy them.

To part from them for ever!—easier to lower the life best loved within the darkness of the grave, easier to lie down in the fulness of youth and die, easier to suffer all that the world can hold of suffering, than to leave the birthright every memory has hallowed, every thought cherished, every childhood's love endeared, every pride and honour of manhood centred in, and the one mad ruin of an Esau's barter lost.

The night was down,—with the shine of the stars on the sea, and the call of the deer on the silence, with the grand woods bathed in dew, and the moorlands steeped in a hushing quiet; and with the night he must pass out from Clarencieux a self-exiled and self-beggared man. All through the day he had wandered in monotonous, almost unconscious action among the places that he loved; by the waves where they stretched under endless crests of rock, and below beetling walls of pine-topped granite; over the heather, blossoming on leagues on leagues of brown wet sand, where the grouse nested and the sea-swallow skimmed; through the dark, interminable aisles of oaks without a memory that could gauge their hoary age; through the rich, wild splendour of forest-growth, all melodious with birds and with the noise of babbling waters; by the side of lonely lakes belted in with leafy screens, under the shelter of towering headlands, all clothed with fern and pine, and with the fragrant wealth of linden-flowers and the clinging luxuriance of summer creepers; through them he wandered, almost insensibly, walking mile on mile without a sense of bodily fatigue, wearing out physical strength without a knowledge of its loss, beaten, strung, haggard, well-nigh lifeless, yet conscious of nothing save that he looked his last for ever on the place of his birth and his heritage.

It was near midnight when he reached his home in sheer exhaustion.

Of the flight of time, of the bodily suffering that racked his limbs, of the weakness upon him from want of food, he knew nothing: he only knew that before the next day dawned he must leave Clarencieux,—his own no more, but given over to the spoilers. All the familiar things must pass from him, and be his no more. The trees that had shed their shade over his childish play would fall under the axe; the roof under which kings had sought covert from the men of his blood would know him no longer; strangers would sit by the hearth to which hunted princes had fled, knowing they were safer trusting in the honour of a Chandos than amidst the Guards of their lost throne-room. In the banqueting-hall, where his ancestors had gathered the chiefs of the nation, curious throngs would rush to stare and barter; the very marble that wore his father's semblance would be sold to whoever would buy; the very canvas from which his mother's eyes smiled on him, would pass away to hang on dealers' walls. In the place that had been sacred to his race none would pause to recall his name; in the heritage where his sovereignty had been absolute, his lightest word treasured, his idlest wish fulfilled, he would have no power to bid a dog be cared for, no right to arrest a hand that should be raised to tear down with laugh and jibe the records and the symbols of the honour of his house.

Through the years, however many, that his life should stretch to, never again could he lay his head under the roof that had sheltered his childhood's sleep; never again could his eyes look upon the things beloved so long; never again could his steps come here, where every rood was hallowed, and where no race but his race had ever yet reigned.

In that hour, nothing but his oath to the man who had bade him live on and meet his fate, whatever that fate should be, stood between him and a self-sought grave.

Death took the young, the fair, the well-beloved—O God! he thought, why would it pass him by? why would it leave him breath on his lips, strength in his limbs, consciousness in his brain, when all that was worth living for was dead, when every pulse of existence through his veins was but a fresh pang?

It was long past midnight; all was very still. Through the opened casements came the lulling of the sea, and the faint, delicate murmur of leaves stirring in a windless air, moved only by the weight of their clinging dews or by a night-bird's wing. All in the vast building slept; all who loved him in the household had looked their last upon his face,—the face that most of them had known since the laugh of its childhood had been on it. The moonlight streamed in, clear and white and cold, through the unclosed windows; chamber opening on chamber stretched on and on in the spectral silver light; the hush of the grave rested on the mighty halls where white-crossed Crusaders had defiled, and houseless monarchs been sheltered, and revellers feasted in the king's name through many a night of wassail, and his own life of careless,

cloudless pleasure, spent with so lavish a hand its golden moments. The quivering ashy gleam of the star-rays poured down the porphyry chamber, leaving deep breadths of gloom between the aisles of its columns, touching with a mournful light the drooping standards and the lost coronet of the last Marquis, shed full across Philip Chandos' statue, and leaving in its darkest shadow the motionless form of the exiled and beggared man by whose madness the honour had departed from their house.

Standing there before them,—those memorials of the dead,—he felt as though they drove him out, dishonoured, alien, accursed as any parricide. Through him had gone what had been dearer to them than life; through him had perished what they had trusted to him; through him their name must be tarnished by sneer, by scorn, worse yet, by pity; through him their might, their fame, their stainless heritage, were dragged in the dust and parted amidst thieves. The crime of Orestes seemed scarce more of parricide than his crime.

Had not his oath held him, had not his word, pledged to one who now lay in his fresh grave, bound his arm powerless, in that hour he would have fallen, killed by his own hand, beneath his father's statue, where the moon touched with its brightest lustre the proud brow of the marble that stood there as though to bear witness against the wreck and shame of his ruined race, the desolation of his forsaken hearth.

The stillness of the after-midnight was unbroken; once the distant belling of a deer echoed over the park without: other sound there was none. He seemed alone with the dead he had dishonoured, —with the great dead whose memories he had shamed and whose treasures he had sold into bondage.

He looked at those lifeless symbols as though they were his judges and accusers: and a shuddering cry broke from him and moaned down the silence of the porphyry hall.

"Oh, God! I saved our honour!"

He felt as though he pleaded before their judgment-seat,—as though he called on them to bear with him in his agony, to be merciful to him in his misery.

He looked once more at all that he must leave for ever, then turned to pass out from the porphyry chamber. But the tension of his strength gave way; weakened by little food, and worn out by exhaustion, his limbs shook, his frame reeled; he swayed aside like a tree under the blows of an axe, and fell prone across the threshold,—the moonlight bathing him where he lay.

For hours he was stretched senseless there, the dog—the one friend faithful—crouched down by him in a sleepless guard. The night passed lingeringly; the flicker of the gentle leaves, or the soft rush of an owl's wing, the only noise that stirred in it without. Now and then there was the sweeping beat of a flight of deer trooping across the sward that echoed from afar; once a nightingale sang her love-song with a music of passionate pain. There was no noise of life in the great forests without; there was none here in the moonlit banqueting-hall.

The wind freshened as the day drew near, blowing through the vastness of the forsaken chambers down the aisles of the porphyry columns: its cooler breath breathed on him and revived him; he stirred with a shuddering sigh. His limbs were stiff and paralysed; his blood seemed frozen; the warm air around felt chill as a tomb. He rose with difficulty, and dragged himself, like a man crippled with age, across the threshold that his steps should never repass. The faint light of the young day was breaking, and shed a colder, grayer hue on all its splendour, from which the white majesty of the sculpture rose, like a spectre keeping silent witness over the abandoned solitude.

Thus, with his head bowed, and in his step the slow, laborious, feeble effort of bodily prostration, he passed onward,—onward through all that never again could his eyes look upon, save in such remembrance as dreams lend to sleep, to mock the waking of despair, —onward through the mighty entrance-hall, in which the silence as of death reigned, where the steel tramp of the soldiers of the king had once re-echoed to its vaulted roof.

He looked back, in longing as agonised, in thirst as terrible, in yearning as speechless in its love as that with which eyes look backward to the bier in which all that made life worth its living to them lies sightless, senseless, and for ever lost. He looked back once,— in such a gaze as men upon the scaffold give to the fairness of earth and the brilliance of sunlight that they shall never gaze upon again. Then the doors closed on him with a hollow, sullen sound; he was driven out to exile, and his place would know him no more.

CHAPTER VIII

THE CROWD IN THE COUR DES PRINCES.

With the day after his last entertainment, the ruin, so sudden and so vast, had been rumoured on the town.

Convulsed with amaze, aghast with indignation, indignant in incredulity, the world at first refused to believe it; persuaded of its truth, it went as nearly mad with excitement as so languid and polite a world could.

Well as he had entertained the world, he had never, on the whole, so richly banqueted it as now, when it could surfeit itself upon a calamity so astounding. It was grateful to all, which no good news could ever claim to be,—the story was so utterly undreamt of, so perfectly complete, without a flaw to make it less terrible, a loophole to make it less dark.

It burst upon the town like the bursting of a shell. In its first rumour it was utterly discredited. "Absurd! Had they not been at his ball last night? Had not every one seen him at the new opera? Ruined?—preposterous! He could never be ruined. They knew better."

Then, when the truth became indisputable, gossip-mongers quarrelled for it as a flock of street-sparrows quarrel for a crumb of bread; and the town felt virtuous and outraged. To have been led into offering such clouds of incense, year after year, to a man who all the while was on the eve of bankruptcy. Gourmets were in despair,—there would be no such dinners elsewhere; and club-wits were in paradise,—there could be no dearth of a topic. Ladies fainted with grief, and revived to wonder if his Limoges-ware would be sold, and wept their bright eyes dim, to clear them again with eager speculation as to the fate of the Clarencieux diamonds; divided interests reigned together in their hearts: it was agonising, it was terrible; no one would ever give them such fêtes, but it was possible—all clouds have their silver lining—that the Chandos jewels perhaps might come into the market!

The Countess de la Vivarol set her delicate teeth as she heard of it.

"I hate him; I have my vengeance. I ought to rejoice," she thought. "and yet——" And yet in solitude her tears fell.

"He is ruined? Well, I have helped to do it," said Flora de l'Orme, with gay self-accusation.

"What a pity!" lamented Claire Rahel. "The art of opera-suppers will perish with him."

"There is an overruling Providence," sighed the worldly-holies; "his books are not fit to be read. Genius?—yes, no doubt; but what is genius without principle?"

"Died game," said a Guardsman. "By George, one saw nothing last night."

"Always eccentric," hinted a club-lounger. "A little mad, *I* think; and, on my word, it's the most charitable thing to suppose."

"Deceived us shamefully; acted most dishonourably," wept Lady Chesterton, to her allies. "My sister's peace is ruined for ever; indeed, I fear for her very life. But we may be thankful perhaps for even this terrible blow: it may have saved more. What happiness could she have looked for with a gambler, a libertine, a free-thinker, however brilliant his career?"

Two or three women—notably one beautiful Roman princess, with the splendour of Rome in her eyes—suffered passionately in their solitude, and thought, wearily pushing off their weighty hair from their brows, "*I* would have gone with him to his beggary."

For the rest, the world talked itself out of breath over its lost leader's fall, and picked the story of his calamity as a carrion picks the bones of the dead camel. It flavoured their white soups, was the choicest olives to their wines, spared them silent moments, let the dull seem witty if he brought a piquant addition to it, and gave a lulling morphine to the pangs of jealous vanity. The world was perfectly certain, of course, that the assertion of ignorance was merely a blind, and that they had been wittingly duped many years. A man run through a fine fortune without knowing it?—ridiculous! And the world began also, as Trevenna prophesied, to find out that "Lucrèce" was very immoral.

Thus the babble busied itself over the wreck of a life, denying it even that sanctity of solitude which even barbarians have conceded to calamity, and exposing it far and wide in those pillories where no adversity can veil, no misery can hallow, no dignity beneath misfortune can avail to shield those once given over to the mercy of insatiate tongues.

They were shocked, grieved, horrified, most compassionately sympathetic, of course; but they were quite of opinion that the idol they had followed had been utterly worthless, and began to discuss with unanimous vivacity the chances of who would be most likely to secure the prize of that inimitable genius Dubosc. It was perhaps regarded as almost the cruellest stroke of the whole fearful affair when the fact oozed out that the celebrated *chef* alleged his spirit to be broken, and announced his intention of retiring for the rest of his days to a villa at Auteuil, there to devote his mind primarily in uninterrupted study, to indite a work which should annihilate Brillat-Savarin, and become the eternal Libro d'Oro of gastronomists.

The world, altogether, was harshly treated. There was no scandal or crime in the story of ruin,—which omission rendered it curry without its cayenne; and the great coveted master—Dubosc—was lost to it. It could have lived without its late idol well enough, but it could not be reconciled to living without his cook. So it said one De Profundis over the virtually dead man, and turned to his sales, much as it would have turned from his tomb to his catalogues.

He was ruined, and they had been deceived; it was frightfully shocking, of course; but meanwhile the virtuosi felt curious about the Quercia terra-cottas and the Fragonard medallions; turf-men could not but congratulate each other that the famous Clarencieux strains would become public property; dilettanti thought of the superb Titians and exquisite Petits Maîtres they had envied so long; Pall Mall loungers rumoured of his cabinets of cigars, and epicures longed to read the catalogue of his Comet, his Regency, and his Imperial growth wines; whilst ladies comforted themselves for their darling's loss by projects for securing his Della Robbia ware, his Evangeliarium in conical letters, enriched with crystals *en cabochon*, his Cellini vases, or his Pompadour cabinets. He had amused them, no doubt, far more brilliantly than any other ever would do; but, since he was gone, it was as well to console themselves with his collections. Chandos before had entertained but his order; now he furnished entertainment for all the world.

When the palace-gates were opened in the raw grey of the morning, and the Poissardes rushed in, eager, envious, insatiate, devouring, filling the Cour des Princes, what matter to them that the privacy of Versailles had never before been broken save by laughter and music, and the soft fall of women's steps and the glitter of a throng of nobles?—what matter that Calamity held the throne-room, that a mighty adversity had set its seal of sanctity upon the threshold? Like the Poissardes in the Cour des Princes, the crowds rushed to enjoy the ruin of the leader of fashion, and

gave not one thought to the fate of the discrowned. His palaces were theirs to wreck and to burn as they would; they pillaged with both hands.

Moreover, as Philippe Egalité, if history bewray him not (which, sooth to say, it often does), took a latent pleasure in that rifling of his house, in that destruction of his order, and went up to see the crowd thronging through the dismantled palace-chambers with a smile on his lips, and his little cane swinging lightly between his fingers, to see the annihilation of the Eldest-born, to see the rooting up and trampling down of the White Lilies, even like Monseigneur d'Orléans, some there were of his own relatives, of his own rank, who came up to watch the spoliation, and to view the wreckers among the household treasures of the fallen man, with a certain sense of gratification, with a certain self-congratulatory remembrance that he had most inconveniently outshone them.

The comet was quenched in the blackness of darkness. Well, on the whole, the stars felt they showed better.

Then the papers, too, took up the theme, and embellished it in leaders and notes of the week, and the *Hypercritic* recanted, and found the tone of "Lucrèce" most unhealthy.

"*Dieu!* how droll an end to his royalty! It is horrible, and yet it's amusing," said Flora de l'Orme, casting herself down, on the day of the first view, on one of the couches in his own room, while strangers stared up at the painted ceiling, tossed over his portfolios, appraised the *bric-à-brac*, wondered at the Daphne, and talked that the French sovereign had bought all the Old Masters. What Demi-Monde said openly, a higher and more delicate Monde thought secretly,—a point of coincidence common betwixt the two.

The world found it amusing, this discrowning and disrobing of its idol. His treasures were scattered far and wide; his favourite gems were numbered in lots; his pictures were borne from barren walls to hang under other roofs and in other lands; the Daphne was torn from her rose-hued shrine to pass to a Russian palace; the Danaïd was bought by an American fur-dealer to go to his mansion in the Fifth Avenue; the plate was bought by the great jewellers to be remelted; the Circassian girls were hired by a French duc; the Park Lane house was let to strangers,—now millionaires of Melbourne-made fortunes,—who had the painted ceiling gilded over, the winter garden changed into a covered glass building for skittles, and the studio turned into a lumber-closet.

The world had followed him, worshipped him, caressed, quoted, courted, adored him; but when his catalogues closed, his interest for it had passed away. His closest friends were not altogether sorry to have his Titians in their galleries, his clarets in their cellars, the Clarencieux breed in their racing establishments, and to feel that one who had eclipsed them had passed out of sight. His ruin was a nine-days' wonder; then a peeress ran away with a famous Tenor, and usurped the attention of society. Women taught themselves a pretty blush when that shocking word "Lucrèce" was spoken of; and men laid bets at evens that he had killed himself.

The world indeed felt that such an end for the tragedy was due to it, especially as it had been acutely disappointed in the fate of Clarencieux.

The summer days found Trevenna at the place that was lost for ever to the great race which had reigned there since the thrones of Rufus and Beauclerc. Ostensibly he was there in a self-imposed devotion to his ruined friend's interests, keeping watch and ward over the spoilers. Indeed, the world altogether gave Trevenna credit for behaving very admirably in the matter,—for showing an excellent spirit throughout. Society naturally could not doubt his regret for a man with whom he had dined almost every day of his life, and began to discover that he was a very sensible and very entertaining person: he spoke with so much good feeling, and yet with so much just discrimination, of his friend's self-destruction.

It was thought, too, very delicate in him that, after the first shock of the town, he withdrew himself as much as possible to Clarencieux, to avoid hearing the misfortune discussed, and to guard, as far as he could, the conduct of the sales from dishonesty. Of course he had no power, as he said; still, if there were any residue, he should too gladly save it for his lost friend, though no one knew whither that friend had gone; and, at all events, it was as well to keep some note of the creditors' proceedings. In truth, in all his life Trevenna had never enjoyed himself so thoroughly.

To lounge through the porphyry chamber, with a bailiff eating his luncheon under the coronet of the last Marquis, to saunter through the portrait-gallery and hear dealers appraise the Lelys and the Lawrences, the Vandykes and the Jamesones, to ride through the forests and know they would soon be felled as bare as a plateau, to feel his horse's hoofs sink into the rose and lilac heather-blooms and think how building lots would soon crush all that flower-fragrance out of sight, to look across from the deer-park over the sea and muse how the mighty herds would be driven out and dispersed, while scaffoldings of bathing-hotels would rise to front the waters where now no step stirred the ospreys and no sound scared the silver-gulls,—this was Trevenna's paradise,—the paradise he had set himself to gain ever since the oath he had sworn in his childish vengeance, standing in the streets of Westminster. Hannibal-like, he had sworn in his boyhood to sack the citadel of his foes; more fortunate than Hannibal, he had seen his Rome fall.

All the cruellest traces of ruin were those which brought him most closely home the unction of his success the writing-table strewn just as the pen had last been thrown down; the studio, with the unfinished picture on the easel; the statues with their snow-white limbs smutched by the dirty fingers of appraisers; the treasures which had been the gift of monarchs noted down at their net value; the volumes that were the collections of centuries numbered and ticketed in lots; the rose-terraces, with all their luxuriance of blossom, their perfect sculpture, their summer sunlight, filled

with the gathering of traders, Jews, and brokers:—these were the things that brought to him the full realisation of his uttermost desires.

"We should put the escutcheon up, and paint 'Ichabod' under it: the glory has gone from your house, my superb aristocrats!" thought he, as he lounged down the façade of the building; and, but that it would have looked a strange lament for his ruined friend, he could have enjoyed doing that bit of buffoonery himself. Like many men of strong will and indomitable endurance,—like Cromwell, and Napoleon, and Frederick,—he had a dash of the broad jester in him, a love of comic, farcical bathos; it enters largely into many of the most powerful characters. For sheer school-boy, devil-may-care love and zest in the devastation, he could have taken a brush himself and painted "Sic transit" on the white pedestal of the minister's statue; for he was very human in his Mephistophelism, and jovial, almost, in the old rich Hellenic sense in his animal spirits. Besides, he had worn a curb so long; it was a delicious sensation to be utterly free and utterly victorious.

A good many of those into whose hands Clarencieux had fallen had made their camp there for a day or so, whilst the valuation was being made. It was given over to many masters; it had none in especial. Trevenna took his quarters there unmolested. He was, of course, closely allied with the lawyers, familiar for years with the agents; and he had a pleasant way with him that made him welcome even to those whom ostensibly he came to inspect and control. He occupied the rooms Chandos had himself always used—that suite of the Greuze chambers looking out on the deer-park; and as he stretched his limbs on the bed, under the costly canopy of silk and lace and golden broideries, he could say to himself, what few ever can say, "I have accomplished the dreams of my youth." He did not say so, so poetically; but he thought, with a laugh of self-congratulation,—

"Which of us is the victor now?"

And deeper than that jesting triumph, more intense in exultation, more exhaustless in sovereign supremacy, was the sense in him of having struck down for ever the aristocrat he had hated, and of having alone, unaided, sheerly by force of his own masterly intelligence and his own matchless wit, pioneered himself into a road on which he would distance the patrician he had so long and so futilely envied, and mount higher and higher, till he filled the void and ascended the throne from which he had flung down his rival.

Thought of remorse, touch of self-condemnation, there were none in him; he had hugged what he deemed his own wrong till he had learned to look on treachery as a legitimate shield, and on chicanery as a legitimate weapon. Moreover, he was of a bright, world-wise, unerring, unscrupulous strength of nature, that never succumbed to weakness and was never tainted by after-doubt.

That this nature was also one that no benefit could soften, no gratitude warm, was the most damning thing in the close-wrought steel of its formation.

The third day of his stay in the Greuze suite, he sat at dinner with the land-steward and one of the late lawyers of the ruined house. He was popular with business men of every class, though they sometimes shirked his pungent knowledge of them.

The confusion that reigned in the building pleased him; he would have liked to have seen the whole stripped and gutted by fire, if he could; he would have watched the leaping flames devour Clarencieux as the Romans watched them devour the fair palace-walls of the city of the Barca brood. The old servants who came to him, homeless, with tears running down their cheeks, thinking little of their own fortunes, but begging him to tell them if he knew aught of their beloved lord; the weary, dejected faces of the keepers and the tenants when he met them in the shadowy woods, the emotion with which strong men shook like women as they spoke of the master they had lost,—all these touched him not a whit. They angered him, because there was one throne from which he could not oust Chandos—the hearts of his people; but they touched him not a second. And in like manner the desolation and confusion of the household pleased him; and he would rather have seen a broker cracking a bottle of rum at the ebony tables of the banqueting-room, than he would have sat there to be entertained with all the sovereigns of Christendom. He had never enjoyed himself more than as he leaned back in the Louis Quinze arm-chair that Chandos had used to occupy, puffed his smoke into the fair eyes of the French painter's women, and ate his cutlet off the gold plate with the arms of Clarencieux raised in bas-relief upon it, which would soon pass to a millionaire's ormolu buffet or be melted down in the silversmith's smelting-room.

As he sat there, the crash of wheels driven at a gallop ground the avenue-road beneath the windows; a carriage swept round and paused. Silence followed. "Is it Esau come back to look at his lost land?" thought Trevenna.

As the thought crossed him, the door of the Greuze cabinet was flung open, the Duc d'Orvâle strode in, his frank face flushed, his chestnut hair—just dashed with a white thread here and there—tossed back disordered, his hazel eyes aflame.

"Where is Chandos?"

His mellow voice rang out almost in the fierceness of a challenge. He entered without any of the ceremony customarily shown his rank, and without any of the formalities of greeting: "*le fou d'Orvâle*," as his world called him, disdained both ceremonies and formalities.

Trevenna rose and received him with that informal indifference with which (it was his best and highest point) he received a prince as unembarrassedly as he would have done a sweep. Indeed, there was something grand and true in his intense democratic scorn for titular differences, if he had not stifled his democracy when it was expedient, as he courted his hated aristocrats when it was lucrative.

"Where is Chandos?" repeated D'Orvale, imperiously.

"Nobody knows, M. le Duc," returned Trevenna. "I suppose you will have heard——"

Philippe d'Orvâle stopped him with a passionate Parisian oath, and struck his right hand on the console by which he stood, till the room rang with the echo.

"Heard? Yes, I have heard. The news reached me in Russia. I have travelled night and day since, without stopping,—though till I reached England I believed the tale the blackest falsehood ever spawned. You do not *know* where he is gone?"

"Nobody does, I have said, M. le Duc," rejoined Trevenna, a little impatiently. He held the French prince in profound derision, as a man who, having the chance to rule half the continent had he chosen, spent all his substance on café-singers and posture-dancers. "He is gone, I am sorry to say; and the world expects him to send it a sensational suicide."

The brown eyes of Duc Philippe, so kindly and so full of gaiety and mirth at other times, grew full of ominous wrath; his colossal strength, that stood unimpaired all the wild excesses of his life, towered in the light against the violet hangings of the cabinet; he faced Trevenna with a superb disdain, mingled with the impatient grief that his face, mobile as a woman's and transparent as a child's, betrayed without disguise.

"What! what! Did every one forsake him in a single day?"

Trevenna shrugged his shoulders.

"Men are rats, monseigneur,—scurry towards a full granary, and scamper away from a rotting house. As for the forsaking, I don't know about that. He gave a ball one night, and let the town hear next day he was all-but bankrupt; he made a present of everything to his creditors, and disappeared another night, God knows where. Now, a man who does that don't please society."

If Philippe d'Orvâle had doubted the fate that had befallen his friend, he could have doubted no longer when those words were spoken, under the roof of Clarencieux, by the man Chandos had protected, befriended, and benefited.

He shook with rage as he heard; the reckless and dissolute prince-Bohemian might have many vices, but he had not the most dastardly vice on earth: he had no desertion for the fallen.

"You were his debtor, sir; of course you are but a time-server!" he said, with the haughty contempt of the Vieille Cour on his fine lips, the noblesse spirit waking in him, utterly as it was accused of slumbering whilst he drank with buffo-singers, laughed with polichinelle-showmen, danced the mad Rigolboche and Cancan at the Château Rouge, and learned their *argot de la Halle* oyster-feasting with blooming Poissardes, in all his headlong Paris orgies. "It is true, then, all this accursed history that I hear in every mouth?"

"Only too true," said Trevenna, more gravely. He would have rather had any eyes upon him than those of this devil-may-care and dauntless noble, this eccentric and hare-brained original, this *bon enfant* of the Coulisses and the Chaumière, whom Europe had pronounced insane for inviting Barbary apes to breakfast; for he

knew how Philippe d'Orvâle loved his friend. "Only too true, M. le Duc. Chandos has lost everything, and gone, no one knows whither; out of England, no doubt. It was very suddenly that the crash came at last,—though, of course, the extravagance of years had long led up to it."

Philippe d'Orvâle swung from him, and turned to the other men with the grand disdain with which he would have turned on to the Marseillaise swarming on the Terrasse des Feuillans, had he lived in the days of the Lilies.

"You were all the creatures of his bounty. Can you serve him no better way than by sitting drinking his wines in his chambers? Could he not be gone one hour before you carrion-crows came to pick your feast? Answer me in a word—What has been done to save him?"

"To save him!" echoed Trevenna, whose imperturbable nonchalance and good humour alone left him able to answer the sudden attack of the fiery Southern noble, which had paralyzed his companions. "Everything, M. le Duc, that tact and good sense could suggest. But you cannot dam up an avalanche once on its downward road: no mortal skill could arrest his ruin. It was far too vast, too complete."

Philippe d'Orvâle seemed as though he heard nothing; he stood there in his Herculean stature, with his fiery glance flashing on the men before him, his lips drawn into a close tight line under the chestnut shower of his beard. So only had they set once before, when he had seen a young girl struck and kicked by her owners on a winter's night outside the *guingette*, where he had been as a Pierrot to a barrière ball of ouvriers and grisettes; and the man who had beaten her till she moaned where she lay like a shot fawn, had been felled down in the snow by a single crashing stroke from the arm in whose veins ran the blood of French nobles who had charged with Godefroi de Bouillon, and died with Bayard, and fought at Ivry under the White Plume.

"What is left him?" he asked curtly. His breath came short and sharply drawn.

"Nothing, monseigneur."

Trevenna felt his hate rising against this haughty roysterer, this sobered reveller, who came to challenge the hopelessness and the completeness of the devastation he had wrought. He could not resist the malicious pleasure of standing there face to face with the aristocrat-ally, the titled boon-companion of the ruined man, and dinning in his ear the total beggary that had fallen on his favourite and his friend.

"Nothing! Not a shilling!" he repeated, with the same relish with which a hound turns his tongue over his lips after a savoury, chirsty plunge of his fangs into the blood he is allowed to taste.

"'Nothing!' Is *this* place gone?"

"It is going by auction, M. le Duc."

The curt, caustic complacency of the answer was not to be restrained for all that prudence could suggest.

"Good God! what he has suffered!"

The words broke unconsciously from D'Orvâle's lips: he knew how he had suffered. In the moment he almost suffered as much. Duc Philippe was reckless, wayward, wasteful of the goods of the earth and the gifts of his brain, was eccentric to the verge of insanity, and fooled away his mature years in the follies of a Rochester, in the orgies of a Sheridan; but he had a generosity as wide and a heart as warm as the stretch of his Southern lands, as the light of his Southern suns. For a moment the grief on him had the mastery; then, shaking his hair as a lion shakes its tawny mane, he dashed his hand down again on the marble breadth of the console.

"Sold? By the heaven above us, never!"

Trevenna bowed with a tinge of ironic insolence of which he was scarcely aware himself.

"It would be happy if monseigneur could make his words good; but, unfortunately, creditors are stubborn things. Clarencieux is no longer our poor friend's, but belongs to his claimants. It will be parcelled out by the auctioneer's hammer."

"*Never!*"

"With every respect, M. le Duc, for your very strong negative, I fear it is quite impossible that it can take effect. Clarencieux is doomed!"

D'Orvâle flashed his glance over him with that mute scorn which his grandfather had given to Sanson when he sauntered up the steps of the guillotine as calmly as he had gone through a minuet with Marie Antoinette or Lamballe.

"You triumph in your patron's adversity, sir. That is but inevitable: every jackal is content when the lion falls! By the God above us, I tell you Clarencieux shall *not* be bartered!"

Trevenna shrugged his shoulders.

"With every deference, M. le Duc, your language, though you *are* a prince, is not polite. With regard to Clarencieux——"

"It shall be mine."

The words were said as Philippe d'Orvâle could say such when he chose, with a dignity that none could have surpassed, with a sovereignty that sat finely on him in its negligent ease, with a force of will which now and then flashed out of his mad caprices and his fantastic vagaries, and showed what this man might have been had he so willed to lead the world instead of to be the hero of a night's wild masking, the king of a score of wine-cup rioters.

"Yours? Impossible!"

Trevenna was startled almost into self-betrayal of the thirst that was upon him for the dispersion and destruction of the lands of Clarencieux,—of the terror that seized him lest, by some mischance, any portion of the bitterness of his fate should be spared to Chandos, any fragment of the home he had been exiled from be saved from ignominy and outrage.

"Impossible?" echoed Philippe d'Orvâle. "No one ever says the word to me!"

There was all the superb defiance of the old nobles of Versailles, all the disdainful omnipotence of the *ancien régime*, in the reply.

When he would, he could exert his command as imperiously, as intolerantly, as any marshal of Louis Quinze.

"Indeed! I fear his creditors will say it."

Trevenna could pause neither for the courtesies of custom nor the ceremonies to rank; he could have killed, if a glance would have slain, this loathed French noble, who, with his seigneur's sympathies and his aristocrat's loyalty to his order and his friend, came to arrest the consummation of that unsurpassed edifice of vengeance which he had erected, at such labour and with such genius, to crush the might of Clarencieux and lie heavy above a suicide's grave.

A fierce oath, passionate as a tornado, broke from under the sweeping beard of Duc Philippe where he stood. But that his honour forbade him to strike a man whom his patrician pride could not have met and satisfied as his equal, he could have dashed Trevenna down on the hearth he insulted, with a single blow of his stalwart right hand.

"Say it?" he repeated. "By God, then, they shall *not*. What! Parcel his lands out among thieves? Let a broker be master here in his stead? Sell his home to some trader's new gold? Never, while there is life left in me! never, if my own castles are mortgaged over my head to get the money they ask! Where is your country's gratitude, that they let his father's memory go pawn? Where are all those he benefited, that there is not a voice lifted against such shame?"

Trevenna shrugged his shoulders. That this man was a prince and a millionaire whom he bearded he cared not two straws: he only remembered Philippe d'Orvâle as a madman with whose outrageous follies all Europe had rung; he only remembered him as one who clung to the idol the world had dethroned, and who threatened to tear down the topmost laurel-wreath with which his own hand had crowned his labour of vengeance.

"Monseigneur d'Orvâle," he said, with that malicious banter which Trevenna could no more hold back in his wrath than the leopard in his will hold back his claws, "if the country spent its money on every great man's extravagant scions, it would have some uncommonly uncomfortable legacies. It don't even pay its own debt; deuce take me if I can see why it should pay Chandos' because his father once was First Lord of its Treasury, and he has seen fit to squander as pretty a property as ever was made ducks and drakes of for pictures and dinners and women. As for those he benefited,—granted they're a good many; but if a lot of artists, and singers, and dancers, and shabby boys who think themselves Shakspeares, and bearded Bohemians who swig beer while they boast themselves Raphaels, were all to club together to help him with a shilling subscription, I don't suppose they'd manage to buy back much more than a shelf of his yellow French novels. I'm as sorry for him as you can be (you can't doubt my sincerity; I shall never get such good dinners); but I candidly confess I don't see, and can't see, why, just because he has been a fool and a spendthrift, a whole nation of sane people are bound to rush to his

rescue with their purses wide open. As he sowed, so he reaps, nobody can complain of that."

Duc Philippe shook in all his mighty limbs; and as he looked at the speaker planted there lightly, firmly, with his feet apart and the insolence of triumph irrepressibly spoken in his face and his attitude, he could have leaped forward like a staghound, and shaken all the life out of him with a single gripe. It was with a mighty effort that he kept the longing in.

"If *you* reap as you sow, M. Trevenna, you will have a fine harvest of woven hemp!" he said, curtly, in the depths of his brown beard, as he swung with an undisguised loathing from him, and turned towards the other men, who, mute with astonishment, and out of deference for the rank of the mad noble who had broken in on them thus, stood passive. "You are his men of business, are you not?—wreckers enriched by the flotsam and jetsam you save out of his shipwreck? Listen to me, then. Whoever they be, or however his creditors hold this place, it shall be mine. Whatever price they ask, whatever liabilities be on it, I will give them and I will discharge. Let them name the most extravagant their extortion can grasp at, it shall not be checked; I will meet it. I will buy Clarencieux as it is, from its turrets to its moorlands; do you hear? Not a tree shall be touched, not a picture be moved, not a stone be displaced. It shall be mine. And, hark you here: I offer them their own terms,—all their greed can crave or fancy; but tell them this, on the word of Philippe d'Orvâle, that if they do not part with it peaceably, if they do not send their hell-dogs out of its places and take the bidding I give them, I will so blast their names through Europe that their trade and their credit shall be gone for ever, and they shall perish in worse beggary than this that they have caused. Tell them that,—Europe can let them know in what fashion I keep my oaths,—and with to-morrow make Clarencieux mine."

The passionate words quivered out on the silence of the painted chamber, furious as a hound's bay, firm and ringing as an army's sound to assault. Then, without another syllable, Philippe d'Orvâle swung round and strode out of the cabinet, his lion eyes alight with a terrible menace, his lion's mane of hair tossed back. He had said enough. When once he roused from his wild masquerades and his headlong Bohemianism to use his leonine might and to vindicate his princely blood, there was not a man in all the breadth of the nations that ever dared say nay to the "Mad Duke."

He saved Clarencieux,—saved it from being sundered in a thousand pieces and given over to the spoilers, though he could not save the honour of its house, the ruin of its race. The world was bitterly aggrieved,—it was deprived of so absorbing a theme, of so precious a prize; and Trevenna could have killed him.

The pyramid of his vengeance had risen so perfectly, step by step, without a flaw; it was unbearable to him that the one stone for its apex should be wanting, the one last line of the record of the triumphs engraved on it should be missing. He had swept all

the herds away, leaving not one; it was unendurable to him that the last coveted ewe-lamb should alone have escaped him. He had destroyed Chandos utterly, hopelessly, body and soul, as he believed,—slain honour and genius and life in him, without a pause in his success. It was intolerable to him that the last drop should not crown the cup, that the green diadem of the Clarencieux woods should wreathe its castle untouched, that the royalties of the exiled race should be left in sanctified solitude, in lieu of being flung out to the crowds and parcelled among the Marseillaise in the desolated Courts of the Princes.

He had longed to see, had it been possible, the plough pass over the lands and the harrow rake out every trace of the banished race; he had longed to see, if he could, the flame of the culturer licking up all the beautiful, wild, useless wealth of heather and fern and forest lilies; he had longed to hear the hammers clang among the woodland stillness, to watch the oaks crash down under the axe, to behold the beauty crushed out under the iron roll and the timber scaffolding of the new speculators, to know that the very place and name and relics of the exiled lord were effaced and forgotten. Through Philippe d'Orvâle this last crowning luxury was denied.

Clarencieux, though he had driven from it the last of its race, escaped him,—escaped the indignity, the oblivion, the desecration he had planned to heap on it; he had made its hearths desolate, but his arm was held back from the final blow with which he had planned to make them also dishonoured, and to raze their stones as though no fires had ever burned there,—till sheep should have grazed where kings had feasted, and wheat have waved where its dead rulers had their graves.

Through Philippe d'Orvâle it was denied him.

Thus, some were faithful to the fallen idol: the sun-browned men who toiled from dawn to evening among the seas of seeding grass and the yellow oceans of the swelling corn; the crippled dreamer whom his fellows thought an idiot that a child might lead; the reckless voluptuary, the prince-Bohemian, whom the world called a madman and vested with every vice that libertines can frame; the dog whom human reason disdains as a brute without speech:—those were faithful,—those only. But they were many, as the world stands.

The two who were deadliest against him, and chiefest without pity or mercy in his fall, were the man he had succoured with his friendship and his gold, and the woman he had loved and honoured.

BOOK THE FOURTH.

CHAPTER I.

"FACILIS DESCENSUS AVERNI."

It was far past midnight in Paris; a chilly, bitter winter's night, in the turn of the going year; a night without stars, in which the snow drifted slowly down, and the homeless couched down shivering into a traitorous sleep,—a merciful sleep, from which they would wake no more,—an endless sleep, to be yearned for passionately when there can be no bread for the parching lips, if breath linger in them, no peace for the aching eyes, if they wake again to a world of want.

It was long past midnight in one of the gambling-dens which mock the law in the hidden darkness of their secret haunts,—the dens which no code will ever suppress, which no legislature will ever prevent. Where any vice is demanded, there will be the supply; let every shape of forbiddance be exercised as it may, in vain. Wherever men be hungered for their own ruin, there will be also those who bring their ruin to them.

This was one of the worst hells in Paris,—the worst in Europe. Men who dared venture nowhere else came here; men on whom the grasp of the law would be laid, were they seen, came here; men who, having exhausted every form of riot and debauchery, had nothing left except the gamester's excitation, came here; it embraced them all, and finished the wreck that other ruin had begun. Other places allured with colour, with glitter, with enticing temptations: this had none of these; it allured with its own deadly charm alone, it made its trade terribly naked and avowed; it let men come and stake their lives, and raked the stake in, and went on without a pause; it was a pandemoniac paradise only for those already cursed.

It was hidden away in one of the foulest and most secret nests in Paris; its haunt was known to none save its frequenters, and none so frequented it save those whom some criminal brand or some desperate doom already had marked or claimed. Close at hand to it, in an outer chamber, were the hot drinks, the acrid wines, the absinthe, and the opiates that were drunk down by ashen lips and burning throats as though they were water; these alone broke the ceaseless tenor of the gambling; these alone shared with it the days and nights of those who plunged into the abyss it

opened for them. Often all on through the dawn, and the noon, and the day, the flaring gas-jets of its burners would be kept alight: the crowd that filled its room would know nothing of time,—not know even that the sun had risen. The gay tumult of the summer life of Paris would be waking and shining on all around it in the clear light of the fresh hours; and still here where the sullen doors barred out all comers the gamesters would play on, play on, till they dropped down dead-drunk, or reeled insensible with want of food and drugs or nicotines. The Morgue had never owed so many visitants to any place as it had owed to this; the Bagne had never received so many desperadoes as it had received from here; the walls of Bicêtre had never been so filled with raving brainless lives, as it had been filled with by the haunters of this den, hidden in the midst of curling crooked streets and crowding roofs, like a viper's nest under the swathes of grass.

Those who owned it were never known; the longest frequenter of its room never knew who the bank was; it was a secret profound, impenetrable,—guarded as closely as its own existence was guarded from the million eyes of the clairvoyant law. No one knew that in two or three superb hotels, with fine carriages, fine dinners, fine linen, with fashionable wives and blameless reputations, with a high name on the Bourse and a reception at the Tuileries, dwelt, in peace and plenty—the proprietors.

Does the world ever guess how a millionth part of the money that fills it is made? The world at large, never!

It was far past midnight in the hell; the gas-glare fell on the painted faces of unsexed women, and on the haggard brows of men who had played on here all through the day and played on through the night. The croupiers were relieved at intervals: the gamblers never moved; they hung there till the sheer physical powers of life gave way, and famine forced them from the tables; stirless and breathless, only at long intervals rending themselves from it to take the drugs and the stimulants that soddened their senses, they were riveted there by one universal, irresistible fascination. Features of every varied kind were seen in the gaudy flare of the gas; but they all wore the same look,—the thirsty, sleepless, intense look of ravenous excitement. It was not the polished serenity of fashionable kursaäls, the impassive languor of aristocratic gaming-tables, the self-destruction, taken with a light word, of the salles of Baden, of Homburg, of Monaco; it was gambling in all its unreined fever, in all its naked excitation, in all its headlong delirium, in all "its arid quest for wealth midst ruin."

There is a vast error in which the world believes,—that gamesters are moved by the lust of gain only, by the desire of greed, by the longings of avarice. It is not so; the money won, they toss it back without an instant's pause, to risk its loss at venture. Avarice is no part of the delirium which allures them with so exhaustless a fascination; the spell that binds them is the *hazard*. Give a gamester thousands, he cares for the gold only to purchase with it that delicious, feverish, intoxicating charm of chance.

There is a delight in its agony, a sweetness in its insanity, a drunken, glorious intensity of *sensation* in its limitless swing between a prince's treasures and a beggar's death, which lends life a sense never known before,—rarely, indeed, once tasted, ever abandoned.

There was scarcely even a sound in the fatal place. Once now and then an oath, a blasphemy, or a shuddering gasping breath broke the charmed stillness, in which the click of the roulette-ball, the rattle of the dice, or the rapid monotone of the croupiers reigned otherwise alone. The room was crowded. Men who had grown old and gray and palsied waiting on the caprices of the colour,—men who had wasted on the framing of cabals intellects that might have rivalled Newton's or Descartes',—men who had consumed their youth in this madness, and, young yet, looked for nothing save a death in a hospital and a pauper's unowned grave, —men who had flung away high birth, high gifts, high chances, and came here to wear out the few last hours of dishonoured lives, —men with eyes in which the wasted genius of a mighty mind looked wistfully out through the bloodshot mists of a drunkard's sight,—men who had the trackers of turf-law or of social law in their trail, and, hiding for very life, knew no nest surer than this foul one,—all these were here in the tawdry glitter of the flaring gas-jets. And there were women, too,—some young, some fearfully young,—loveless and rouged, and hacking bitter coughs, or laughing ghastly laughs, playing, playing, playing insatiate, with the thirsty, eager, devilish glare aching in their painted eyes

Among them stood Chandos.

The look which had set on his face the night that he had left Clarencieux had never left it; its glorious beauty survived the ravages of misery, the gaunt sleeplessness of a gamester's days, the wreck of all greater, better, higher things in him. Nothing could stamp it out utterly; but it had something more fearful than any one of the other faces crowded round them. It survived to show all that he had been,—to mark more utterly all he had become.

For he had fallen very low.

He had met calamity greatly; he had been tempted to sell his honour for passion's sake, and he had repulsed the temptation; he had been allured to evade justice, and secure comparative peace, by acting a lie to the world; he had refused, and had given up all, to remain with a stainless honesty and a conscience uncondemned. He had done these things with a sudden power of will, a sudden steel-knit strength of resolve, that had sprung in the instant of their need, giants full-armed, from the voluptuous unheeding indolence and indulgence of his life. But characters cannot change in a day; endurance may be forged hard in the flame of adversity, but it will give way many a time first, and melt and writhe and bend and break at last. When all had been done, all ended, all sacrificed, all lost, the force which had sustained him had broken down, the utter reaction followed.

The habits of his life had left him with no shield; the temper of

his creeds had left him with no shelter, against the storm that had burst over him. His only knowledge had been how to enjoy; none had ever taught him how to suffer. A limitless indulgence had been the master of his existence; he had no comprehension of calamity. With latent greatness, he had dominant weakness; as the limbs that lie ever on couches of down are enervated and sinewless, so his nature that had basked ever in the warmth and the light of enjoyment, had no stamina to bear the crushing desolation that struck all from his hands at one blow.

In the moment of emergence, of temptation, he had risen equal to it, risen above it, and been great; in the darkness that followed, in the darkness in which he was driven out into exile, stripped, mocked, abandoned, left in beggared solitude, to drift to his grave as he would, he sank under the burden that he bore. A strong man might have gone down powerless under the accumulated anguish, the blasted devastation, of such a fate. He who had known nothing but the caress of fortune from his birth, he who had all the loathing of pain and of deformity of the Achæan nature, he who had never felt a desire unfulfilled, a command unaccomplished, he who had been pliant to frailty, yielding to effeminacy, could have no sustaining force to enable him to face and to contend with the destruction that smote him to the earth. All who had kissed his feet forsook him as though he were plague-stricken; there was little marvel that he forsook himself.

He seemed to walk like a blind man through a starless night; he had neither sight nor knowledge: all that was left to him was the consciousness of misery, the power to suffer; the power to endure was dead. He drifted senselessly on, far on evil roads, far towards the murder in him of all that he had once been. He lived in infinite wretchedness, and the very memory of all better things died out in him. There is no arrest in a downward road. In the way of honour and honesty, and every holier thought and loftier effort, life piles obstacles breast high; but in descent there is no barrier, down the ice-slope there is no pause, till the broken limbs are dashed to pieces in the black crevasse below.

In the sheer instinct for covert in which the hunted animal unconsciously finds his lair, he had made his way to the safe solitude and secrecy of a great city. He shunned every sign, every sight, that could recall the world he had left to him, or him to it. The place of his refuge was known to none; it was hidden among the innumerable roofs of a close quarter; it was quitted only at night or in the earliest gray of the morning, and quitted then only for the gambling-dens. There was not a creature with him or near him that he had known or loved, save his dog. A burning fever consumed him at times; at all others he was sunk in a lethargy more dangerous for his reason than even the oblivion of opium-dreams. The loss of lands, of wealth, of power, he would have met with the courage of race and of manhood; it was the desertion of every creature he had aided, of every life he had loved, it was the Judas-betrayal of all he had trusted, that had killed all strength and all life in him.

He lived in intense wretchedness; the little gold he had on his person was not so much as he had spent on a woman's bracelet, on an hour's entertainment. The absolute fangs of want might be upon him in a single day. He who had feasted emperors more brilliantly than they reigned in their own courts, and who had only spoken a wish to have it fulfilled as by enchantment, might any day want actually bread. Every thing around him, every thing touched or seen or heard, was such as would have been loathsome and unendurable to his voluptuous and fastidious habits a few short weeks before: yet these he was barely conscious of; he was lost in the stupefaction of a misery too great to have any other sense awake in it. Now and then he would glance with a shudder round the places to which he wandered; now and then he would turn sickening from the food offered him; more often all things passed him unnoted, and in his eyes there came gradually the lustreless dreamy vacancy which presages the rupture of the reason, the dulling of the brain. For hours he would lie prostrated. When he rose, it would only be to drag his limbs wearily out into the night, and go to the gaming-hells, where intoxication as sure, and even yet more deadly, was to be found, where alone he gained such gold as sufficed to keep life in him, and to give him a stake to cast again.

Strangely enough, the temptress favoured him. Hazard often allures her prey with that merciless mercy, and fills his hands only to hold him closer in her coils. He won enough to keep life in him, —such as life was now.

This was the issue to which his career had come; this was the fate to which he, who in his bright visionary childhood had vowed to rival in his nation's story the chivalrous honour of an Arthur's fame, had come; his pride trampled out, his genius drowned in drugs, his waking hours consumed in the gambler's delirium, almost all manhood slain in him. The Hebrew's thought was right: his enemy's work on him was worse than murder. It was a terrible abasement, a terrible surrender; it was frailty, cowardice, suicide; but the storm had beaten down on his once proud head till it hung in a slave's shame. Existence had grown so hideous to him that he sunk beneath its ceaseless torture, longing alone for death.

Those who have from early years been tried in the fires of affliction may grow the sterner, firmer, more highly tempered for it, like the wrought steel; but those to whom it has been wholly unknown in the soft sensuousness of a joyous life, stagger and fall swooning at the first intolerable breath of its blasting furnace.

Chandos stood now amidst the crowd about the play-tables, in companionship with much of all that was worst and most desperate in Paris. He did not know them; he scarcely knew how vile the character of many round him was. His license had been the license of a graceful Catullus; his sins had been the soft sins of an elegant Sardanapalus; he knew nothing of the ignominy of great cities; he knew nothing of the coarse criminality of such as those who harboured and gambled here. He had strayed to its haunt

by chance; he returned again and again for the sake of its secrecy, its opium-drugged wines, its reckless play. He had no knowledge of the companions with whom he was thrown; he was too utterly lost in his own misery to note or to loathe them, whilst they looked on, half awed, half curious, at one whom all Paris knew by name and sight, whose history all knew also, as he came among them day after day, night after night, with that deathless beauty, that inextinguishable grace left in him, as they were left in the slaughtered body of Alcibiades, to show how royal a blood had run in his veins, how mighty, how majestic, how hopeless a wreck was there.

Once one of them touched his arm,—a young girl, not twenty.

"Why are you here? You are as beautiful as a god! You are not like us—yet."

He looked at her with a dull vacancy, and answered nothing, as he filled a glass with brandy. She thrust the opiate he had mixed with it back to his hand.

"Drink enough to kill yourself *at once*. Don't live to be what you will be. Such as you go to a madhouse."

Her words dreamily pierced through the semi-insensibility of his brain: he set the opiate down undrunk,—for that once. He thought of the dead man who had bade him meet his fate, whatever his fate became; but the next moment he was again at the gaming-table, the next moment only its mad tempting was remembered.

He never heeded what he won, what he lost, though he knew that the very food of the next day hung in the hazard; he would have blessed the famine that should have killed him. But he had the gamester's instinct in him; the gamester's peril alone gave him an oblivious intoxication; he never left it, except when he wandered out to some sleeping-place and flung himself down to sleep, well-nigh as lifelessly as the dead sleep, hours, perhaps days through.

So months had gone with him. The splendid strength and stamina of his frame resisted the ravages that were consuming them; but what was worse than the body perished: the mind decayed, swiftly, surely.

The golden summer, the ruddy autumn, the bitterness of early winter, had passed; he noted no change of seasons; night and day were alike to him; he only dully wondered how long life would curse him by leaving its throb in his heart, the breath in his lips.

He had played thirty-six hours now at a stretch, among the painted women and the haggard men who filled this pandemonium. He had played on till he had lost all,—the only time that he had ever done so; the last franc was staked and swept away. He stood blankly gazing down at the tables; he felt that the means of gaining the one intoxication that was precious to him was gone, he had no remembrance that it turned him on the streets a beggar. The eager throngs, seeing the card pass without his stake being laid on it, pushed fiercely, ravenously, to get his nearer place. He let them take it, moving as a somnambulist, and made his way out down the staircase and through the low, masked side door that alone lent admittance to the gambling-rooms: the face of the house

was merely a fruiterer's and a tobacconist's shops. He went out mechanically; he knew he must get more gold or go without this, which had become the single craving necessity of life. Where? He who had owned the aristocracies of whole nations as his friends, and had given to all who asked, as though the world were his, had not a shilling now to get him bread.

He walked on aimlessly, unheeding the snow which poured down on his bare head, the cutting north wind that blew like an ice-blast. It was between three and four in the morning; there was scarce a soul abroad. In the quarter where he was few carriages ever rolled, and the thieves and revellers who filled it were mostly housed in some den or another in the inclement weather. The dog followed him closely; otherwise he was almost alone in the tortuous, endless streets, whose windings he took without knowing whither they led him. The bitter rush of the wind lifted the masses of his hair, the sleet drove in his eyes, the cold chilled him to the bone; he was adrift in the streets of Paris, without a sou to get him food or bed,—he who a few months before had reigned there in a splendour passing the splendour of princes!

He longed for death,—longed as never man yet longed for life. The unspeakable physical misery alone passed his strength; to the nerves that had shrunk from pain, to the senses that had been steeped in every pleasure, to the tastes that had loathed unsightliness as a torture, to the habits that had been enervated in all the richness of enjoyment, the wretchedness that was now his portion was horrible beyond the utterance. He who had never known what an hour's suffering, what a moment's denial, were, now endured cold, and exposure, and need of food, and all the racking pangs of want and fever, like any houseless beggar starving in the night.

He wandered on and on,—still always in the same quarter, still always keeping, by sheer instinct, far from all that he had once known,—far from all that had so lately seen him in the magnificence of his reign. He wandered on, under the lowering walls of pent-up dwellings, through the driving of the slowly-falling snow, against the cutting breath of the ice-chill air. A strange faintness stole on him, a strange numbness seized his limbs; he began to lose all sense of the keen blasts that blew against him; the intensity of cold began to yield place to a dreamy exhaustion and prostration, half weary, half soothing: he felt sleep stealing on him,—deep as death. He had no wish to resist, no power to overcome it; the languor stole over all his frame, his limbs failed him; he sank down and stretched himself out as on some welcome bed, with a heavy sigh, lying there on the snow-covered ground, with the snow falling on his closed eyes and the wind winding among his hair. The dog couched down and pressed its silky warmth against his breast; profound rest stole on him: he knew no more.

CHAPTER II.

"WHERE ALL LIFE DIES, DEATH LIVES."

THERE was intense solitude in the dark, cheerless night; the snow drifted noiseless down; now and then the wild winds broke and howled with a hollow moan: all else was very still,—still as the starless, ink-black skies that bent above. One shadow alone moved through the gloom that a yellow lamp-light here and there only served to make more impenetrable,—a shadow frail, bent, delicate as a woman's, feeble as that of age,—the shadow of a cripple.

He dragged himself along with slow and painful effort; when he passed under one of the lamps, its glare shone on a face fair and spiritual, with great dark dreaming eyes, that looked out at the snow-flakes wearily,—the face of Guido Lulli. The fragile, helpless, pain-worn Provençal, who shuddered from cold as a young fawn will shudder in it, and who had barely till now quitted the chamber where he wove his melodious fancies and forgot a world with which he could have no share, was out in the bitterness of the winter's night, on a quest that his fidelity had never slackened in through many months of vain toil and fruitless search. The search was ended now.

His foot touched the outflung arm of the form that lay prostrate, half on the stone of the steps on which it had sunk, half on the road to which the limbs had been stretched in the strange peace and languor which had come with the slumber of cold and fasting.

The snow had fallen faster and heavily in the last few moments; it covered the hands, and was shed white and thick upon the uncovered hair and upturned brow. A lamp burned just above; its flicker, glowing dully through the raw gray mist, shone on the death-like calm of the features in the breathless rest of sleep from which few ever awaken. Lulli stooped and looked; then, with a great cry, sank down on his knees beside the senseless form. He knew it in a glance, all changed though it was: his search was over.

The dog lifted his head and gave a moaning of recognition, half of joy, half of entreaty; but he would not stir from where he crouched on his master's breast, lending with his warm breath and his curly hair and his massive strength, such aid and protection as he could against the blasts of the storm and the chills of the night. If any life lingered, he had saved it.

Lulli raised his voice in a shout for aid; helpless and weak as he was in all actions for himself, loyalty and gratitude gave him the strength of giants to save the man who in his own extremity had saved him.

There was no answer to his call. He was alone in the bleakness and the darkness of the wintry dawn, with one whom he firmly believed to be dying—dying of cold, of exposure, and of want,

the man whom but a year before he had known in every luxury and every pleasure that the world could give,—the man who had come to him in the summer-heats of Spain as the saviour of his life and art, who had seemed to him the very incarnation of beauty, of joy, of splendid manhood, of proud, rejoicing, perfect strength.

The roll of a carriage coming slowly, and muffled on the whitened roads, smote on his ear at last; he raised a louder cry, with all the power he could gather. He heard a woman's voice from the interior bid the coachman stop and wait. In the dull gleam of the lamp he could see the glitter of jewels flash as she leaned out; her words came strangely clear to him through the frosty darkness, as she asked, in French,—

"What is it?"

"One dying,—and from cold!"

"Dying! Wait while I see," said the voice he had heard, as the form he could dimly perceive through the gloom swayed from the carriage-steps and came towards him; a woman who had been, who indeed was still, very lovely; a woman whose youth was waning, but who still was young; a woman in rich costly draperies that the yellow light glittered on, and with the blue gleam of sapphires above her brow. She was Beatrix Lennox.

A moment, and she stood beside Lulli, disregarding the snow-flakes that drove against her, and the icy wind that blew through her scarlet cashmeres. She was a woman of swift impulse, of warm pity.

"Is he dying, you say?" she asked, with an infinite gentleness in her voice, while she stooped to look at the prostrate form. She started with a loud cry.

"Chandos!—merciful Heaven!"

Her lips turned very pale. Her voice trembled.

"Oh, Heaven, what a wreck! I have seen so many, yet never one like this!"

She was silent a moment, gazing down at the senseless features, and softly touching, with a caressing hand, the dead gold of the hair, all wet and whitened by the driving of the snow. Then she turned with a nervous energy; she was impetuous and rapid, and firm in act.

"He is not dead," she said, impatiently; "but he will die if he stay there. Lift him into my carriage, quick! We must get him warmth and stimulants; my house is so far off, and there is no fit place here——"

"My lodging is not distant. Let him come there," pleaded Lulli, piteously, while he drew the inanimate hands closer into his own, as though afraid he should be robbed again of the one so long lost, so terribly found.

"Yes, yes; anywhere that is near!" she answered, rapidly, while she flung the scarlet down-lined draperies she wore about the half-dead limbs, and stood, regardless of the blasts that howled, and of the heavy icy mists that descended on the earth like sheets of solid water, as her servants, at her bidding, raised him and laid

him gently down upon the cushions of her carriage. She felt nothing of the searching wind, nothing of the drenching storm, nothing of the flakes that were driven against her delicate skin and her masked-ball dress. Her eyes were dim with tears; her lips shook; her heart ached.

"How many fallen I have seen!" her thoughts ran; "yet never such a fall as his."

When life and sense returned to Chandos, he was stretched before a wood fire, that shed its ruddy, uncertain light over a darkened room; the dog was licking his hands and murmuring its love over him where he lay; and beside him, watching him, were the musician and the richly-hued and delicate form of Beatrix Lennox.

"Clarencieux?" he muttered, dreamily. It was the one loss ever at his heart, the one name ever in his thoughts.

It struck those who heard it with a pang; they knew how endless must be this longing, how endless this loss.

Lulli stooped over him, his voice very broken.

"Monseigneur, do you not know me?"

Chandos looked at him dreamily, blindly. His head fell back with a sigh of weariness.

"No, no; if you had been merciful, you would have let me die."

The words told his listeners more mournfully, more utterly, than any others could have done, how bitter to him had become the burden of the life once so rich and gracious.

Beatrix Lennox, albeit a woman who had known the world in phases that harden and chill and fill with an ironic mockery for most emotions, those who do so know it, looked on at him, where he lay, with eyes of pathetic pain, dim and aching with unshed tears. She had seen him but so late in all the glory of his kingly manhood, of his unshadowed youth!

Lulli, his voice broken with the weeping that shook him like a young child, stooped over him, passionately praying for his recognition.

"Monseigneur! my master, my friend, my saviour! look at me; you know me?"

The long-familiar tones reached the brain, dulled by cold and want of food.

Chandos lifted his eyelids, laden still with the sleep that had been so nearly the sleep of death, and saw Beatrix Lennox. He remembered them both then, and, in the old instincts of his courtesy to women, strove to rise. With an effort he staggered to his feet, and leaned heavily against the high slate shelf above the warm wood-piled blazing hearth. He could not speak; the sight of these two faces so well known in his past—that past which seemed severed from him as by the gulf of a lifetime—brought back with a flood of memories on his slowly waking thoughts what he had been, what he was. They, looking on him and seeing the ruin a few months had wrought, did not know how vast, how terrible the change was in him more utterly than he himself.

His eyes closed involuntarily with a shudder. He had buried his life in the dens of the populous city to escape sight of all those once familiar to and with him. That any of those should meet him now was torture almost unbearable to the pride which survived in him above all that had sought to shame and stay it.

"How do I come here?" he said, feebly, while his gaze wandered towards them with the pathetic glance of a man paralyzed, whose eyes alone can speak.

"The cold had struck you, and you had fallen," answered Beatrix Lennox, in her voice that fell on him like soothing music. "My carriage was near; we brought you to M. Lulli's room. You are weak still; the night was so bitter. Wait and rest before you speak."

She restrained the tears that choked her utterance; for, with the tact that nature gave her, she divined how fearful must be to him the knowledge that they had found him in his destitution and his suffering,—they, who had been the companions of his glittering prosperity, the one the recipient of his widest charity, the other the guest of his gayest hours. She sought to hide her own knowledge of it as she could.

Lulli could exercise no such self-restraint; he knelt at Chandos' feet, his head bowed in his hands, his heart half broken.

"Oh, monseigneur," he murmured, passionately, piteously, "how have I searched for you! how have I grieved for you! I sought you night and day,—sought you living or dead. Could you not have trusted *me*? Could you not have let *me* go out with you to your exile?"

Chandos looked down on him.

"Forgive me, Lulli, I forgot *you* would be faithful."

"You never forgot!" cried the musician, lifting his head eagerly, while he flung back the silky masses of his dark hair off his eyes. "You never forgot me; you only forgot yourself! You remembered my needs, you remembered my helplessness, you remembered to save me and serve me to the last: all you forgot was how I loved you!"

Chandos stretched out his hand to him with his old gesture; he could not answer, the Provençal's fidelity moved him too deeply, stirred him too bitterly, in its contrast with the abandonment of well-nigh every other.

Beatrix Lennox drew nearer, and laid her hand softly on his arm.

"You were very near death an hour ago. Rest now, and take what I bring you."

With the skill and the speed of her sex, she brought him with her own hands some food and some warm and fragrant coffee, standing there in her masquerade-dress all glittering with Venetian gems and Venetian grace, with the ruddy wood-fire light upon her, as she had stood in the driving down-pour of the snow-storm. The hand that held him the food so tenderly had but just laid aside the black coquette Venetian mask of her opera-ball; but of a surety the ministration was not less gentle, the heart that

prompted it not less full of divine charity, than if it had just cast aside the gray serge of a religious recluse.

It was the first food for months from which he had not turned in loathing; he took it with a gratitude that, though his eyes alone spoke, sank into her memory for ever. She saw, what Lulli did not see, that it was the first he had taken for many hours, and that long fasting had done its work on him not less surely than the winter night.

"Can he want bread?" she thought, with a quiver of horror. Heartless though the world called her, this *reine gaillarde* of a lawless court, she would have gone and sold her jewels and her cashmeres to bring him gold, had she not known by instinct that, though he might die of hunger, he would never take an alms.

"I owe you a great debt, Mrs. Lennox," he said, simply, as his eyes rested on her, all the light dead in them, a heavy languor weighing down their lids, and a haggard darkness circling them, but with their weariness, a look of infinite thankfulness to her and to the one man who alone had never forsaken and reviled his memory.

"You owe me none." The words were very low, as she stood swaying to and fro the gold strings of her Venetian mask. "I owed you some time ago a far greater one."

"Owed me?"

His senses and his memory were still dim; warmth and, with warmth, life were fast flowing back into his veins, but he felt as one in a dream; the faces he looked on were so familiar, the place was so strange, he could not disentangle fact from fantasy.

"Yes!"

She came closer towards him, standing there in the reflection of the blazing wood, with the scarlet and black folds of her masquerade-dress sweeping downward in the glow, and her haughty, handsome face turned to him with an inexpressible sweetness and tenderness tremulous upon it. The thought woke in him vaguely, even in that moment, Had this woman loved him? She, swift to read unspoken thoughts, guessed it.

"Do not think that," she said, with a smile of infinite sadness. I never loved you; it is very long since *my* heart beat. But I would serve you anyhow,—anywhere,—if I could. Do you remember being with me at an opera-supper at the Maison Dorée, years and years ago? No! how should you? It was only memorable to me. Some German prince gave the supper,—who I forget now; but there were women present with whom even I abhorred association. The jests were very free, the license very unchecked, and I—I had forfeited the right to *resent*. You alone noticed it,—you alone pitied me; you went and spoke in a whisper to the prince. He laughed aloud. 'The Lennox, who is she to——' You silenced him. 'She was at least the daughter of a gallant gentleman; that should not be forgotten.' Then you came to me with your gentle courtesy, and offered to take me to my

carriage. Ah! I was wrong to say I never loved you. I loved you *then!* I never forgot it,—I never shall."

Chandos looked at her with a great gratitude, and yet a pain wellnigh as great; tenderness shown him subdued and touched him as it subdues and touches a woman.

"God knows it was trifle enough. If others remembered as you do——"

He paused; no words ever escaped him that could sound like a lament for the ingratitude that had forsaken him on every side.

"Ah," she said, passionately, "it was no trifle to *me*. If ever I can repay it—if it be twenty years hence—I will, let the payment cost what it may."

The promise was very hurried and broken in its utterance for the most fluent and most eloquent woman of her time. She took his hands and bent over them.

"If you could let me serve you!" she murmured, as softly as his mother could have breathed him her farewell; then, with a long, loving gaze, she left him, the black and scarlet hues of her draperies lost in the gloom of the fire-shadows. She could have stayed with him, stayed with him willingly, to aid, to tend on, to assist him with every ministry that love, with which no touch of passion blent, could give; but she knew him to be very proud; she saw that pride was not dead, but lived in passionate pain beneath calamity; she felt that the fewer eyes there were upon him now, the better could he bear the knowledge that they had found him, a homeless wanderer, dying in the streets of Paris. So, true to her unselfish instinct, and guided by a tenderness higher than compassion, she left him,—she whom the world called an adventuress, without pity and without conscience.

As she passed from the chamber, he sank down wearily and faintly, his head bowed on his breast, his limbs stretched out in racking misery from cold and stiffness in the heat of the leaping flames. He, who in his superb completeness of strength and of health had never known what the illness of a day was, suffered now every ill of mind and body,—suffered almost more in this moment, when the reviving warmth and the stimulant of the choicer food gave him the power of vivid consciousness, than he had done in the stupor of his opium-drugged senses. Yet no word, scarcely any sign, escaped him of what he suffered; there was too proud an instinct in him still. Lulli watched him silently; the dog nestled close in the light of the hearth. For many moments there was not a sound in the chamber; sheer physical aching pain wore Chandos down, seeming to load him with the weight of iron chains, to burn him with the scorch of fire. He wished—he wished to God—that they had left him in that dreamless slumber upon the snow to die, with no more knowledge of the life he quitted than the frozen stag that stretches out its stiffened limbs upon some desolate moor-side.

Gradually, slowly, bodily exhaustion conquered; the pangs that racked his frame were soothed to comparative peace by the after-action of the opiates he had so long taken; the warmth of the

hearth lulled him to rest; his eyes closed, his breathing grew gentler and more even; he stretched himself out with a weary sigh, as he had done in the darkness of the streets, and he slept at last as he had never slept since the night he learned the story of his ruin,—slept for hour on hour, with scarce a breath that stirred the stillness of his repose or could be heard upon the silence. That sleep saved him from the fate which the girl in the gaming-den had foreseen for him if he lived.

When he awoke the sun was high in the western skies; it was far after noon. Lulli sat beside him, watching with a patience no length of vigil could exhaust; the dog lay asleep; the ruddy glow of the great fire on the hearth was dying down, though its intense heat still filled the chamber. His eyes, as they unclosed, met Lulli's resting on him with that unwearied spaniel look which had scarce ever relaxed its watch over that repose which so resembled death.

"Is it you, Guido?" he asked, faintly. "Ah, yes, I remember. And you have been waiting by me there so many hours!"

The Provençal strove to smile, though the tears stood thick in his eyes.

"Monseigneur, I would never weary of *that*."

"I know. There are few like you."

"Monseigneur, if all those whom you once served were like me, there would be many throngs."

Chandos answered nothing; he raised himself on his left arm, and lay on the hearth, gazing at the flicker of the crimson flame, at the fall of the gray noiseless ash.

The deadliest pang to Richard Plantagenet, in all the bitterness of his discrowned fortunes, was when his hound, who loved him, who caressed him, who had been fed from his hand, and had slept by his pillow, went from him to fawn on Bolingbroke. "*Il vous suivra, il m'éloignera*," said the forsaken king,—a whole history of infidelity in the brief pathetic words. The deadliest pang of his lost royalties to Chandos lay in the abandonment of all, save this poor cripple, whom he had loved and saved, and who had caressed him in the days of his purple and his power.

"You can tell me," he said suddenly,—his voice was very hushed, and came with effort through his lips,—"what is the fate of—of——"

"Clarencieux?"

He bent his head.

The musician looked at him eagerly.

"Did you not know? Monseigneur d'Orvâle has bought the whole."

Chandos looked up, a flush of breathless gratitude, of incredulous relief, banishing for the moment all the broken, aged, colourless pain from his face.

"Is it true? Philippe d'Orvâle?"

"Would I cheat you? True as that we live. He forced them to surrender it to him,—bought it untouched, undespoiled."

"Thank God!"

He covered his face with his hands, and for the only time in all his adversity, save the moment when old Harold Gelart had spoken under the elms of the western terrace, great storm-drops forced themselves through his closed lids and his clenched fingers, and fell one by one, like the rain before a tempest.

Far more to him than any mercy to himself was the mercy which had saved Clarencieux from sacrilege, and barter, and destruction.

"Monseigneur d'Orvâle has it," pursued the swift sweet voice of the Provençal. "Not a tree will be touched, not a thing be displaced. He sent for me, and bade me live there; but I could not: it would have broken my heart. He has sought for you everywhere; he has longed to find you; he would have you return to it as though it were your own still."

Chandos shivered where he sat.

"*I!* I am dead to it for ever."

He could not have borne to look upon the purple distance of its woods, he could not have borne to stand beside the far-off course of the mere river that flowed towards it,—he who had forfeited his birthright.

Lulli was silent; his eyes watched ever, with a dog-like love, the form of Chandos, where he lay at length in the dying glow of the flames, his face hidden, his frame shaken now and then with an irrepressible shudder. An unutterable thanksgiving was in his heart for the fate which had spared his home and his lands from the shame and ruin of dissolution; yet the knowledge that another dwelt there, that another had bought his heritage for ever, brought in him, as it had never come before, the full realisation of his own eternal exile.

He raised his head after many moments, and strove to steady his voice.

"Thank him from me; he will know *how* I thank him. I used to feel how true, how generous, his heart was, how noble a friend he would ever be. Tell him he is merciful beyond men's mercy——"

"*You* will tell him?" asked Lulli, softly: "you will see him? He loves you so well."

Chandos gave an irrepressible gesture of pain.

"Not yet; not yet," he said, hurriedly. "I doubt if ever——"

The words were unfinished; in his own soul he felt as though never could he force himself to look on the friends and companions of that lost life which seemed to lie so far behind him in a limitless distance, dead and past for ever. Nor in himself did he think that he would long live,—long bear this burden of hopeless wretchedness,—long endure this existence which was unceasingly upon the verge of madness or of death.

What had he now? The food that he ate here might be the last ever to pass his lips. He had not a farthing wherewith to buy bread even for his dog.

Lulli looked at him wistfully, and stooped forward nearer, a kindling light on his face.

"Monseigneur, hear me! When I was dying, you saved me; when I was in beggary, you gave me food and shelter; when I was poor, and friendless, and alone, you were the world to me. You found me in misery, and pitied me; and for the art that is my life and my soul you gained me hearing and you gave me fame. Through you I am no more poor; they talk of me; my *Ariadne* has been heard through all the width of Europe, and they have paid her beauty with their gold, though *that* was never my thought with her. Listen! Pay my debt to you I never can; I love to owe it and to cherish it. But in some little sense I may serve you; in some degree you can make me happy by letting me ask you to remember it. Stay with me; let me toil for you, labour for you, wait on you, gather the gold they offer me for you. It will be such joy to me! Without the sound of your voice, I am like a blind man lost in this wide world; if you will only wait with me, you can give me back strength, power, ambition, everything, and I shall love the coins that I hate now, if you will let me glean them all for you, let me do for you in some little kind all that you did for me when I was a homeless cripple, dying, with all the music that was in me killed and silenced by my hunger and my poverty."

His voice rose in his impassioned entreaty, till it thrilled through the still chamber like one of his own melodies; he would have slaved, have starved, have killed himself, to have saved or served the man who had had pity on his youth.

Chandos heard, and the words moved him deeply as the words of the old yeoman had done. He never lifted his head, but he stretched out his right hand silently, and grasped the frail, nervous, transparent hand of the musician in a close clasp.

"What you wish cannot be," he said, huskily. "I should be lost to shame indeed! But from my heart I bless you for your fidelity—for your love."

"Cannot be? Why not? In *my* need you aided me," pleaded Lulli, his wistful eyes pleading more fervently than his words. He knew too little of the world to know why, in his own sight, Chandos would have felt himself shamed beyond all humiliation had he listened to his prayer.

The blood flushed his listener's forehead with a pang of the old pride of his proud race; he could not tell this guileless, generous, devoted creature that he would sooner die like a dog, die of famine in the streets, than live on upon the alms of his debtor.

"It cannot be," he said, gently. "Do not ask it, Lulli. If you have fame and comfort, I am more than rewarded by you."

The Provençal's face darkened mournfully; the whole of many months had been passed in a vain quest for his lost master, in an unwearied, though, as it had seemed, hopeless search, through which his sole sustaining thought had been to find his solitary friend and to repay in some faint measure all the gifts he owed.

Chandos rose slowly from where he leaned upon the hearth; his limbs were still stiff and weak, though the profound repose of long-unbroken sleep had restored him something of strength.

and the life-giving warmth in which he had rested had lessened the pain in his brow and eyes and the oppressive weight on his lungs.

"Stay with me! oh, for pity's sake, stay with me!" pleaded Lulli, passionately. So willingly would he have given up everything on earth to be allowed to starve for the only living creature who had ever pitied him.

Chandos gave a faint sign of dissent; he knew not what he should do, he knew not whether in the next day and night he might not perish of the same exposure and want he had been now rescued from, but his highest instincts were not dead in him; he would not linger here, though for one moment physical weakness and all the long habit of physical indulgence came upon him with a fearful longing to lie down and rest without effort in the soothing heat of the hearth, to stay in the lulling peace and shelter of the quiet chamber.

Serious illness was on him, as well as the inertia of fever and of languor. For the moment he felt it beyond his strength to pass out into the bleak biting wind, to face the homeless night, to accept the fate that drove him out into the wilderness of the great city, with none to give him rest, with nothing to buy him food. He longed to turn back, and lie down and die in the dreamy comfort of that calming fire-glow.

But he moved away, only pausing one moment to droop his head to Lulli's ear.

"Tell me, what of *her*?"

The musician turned shuddering away.

"Do not ask me! do not ask me!"

Chandos staggered slightly.

"Is she dead?"

"Would to Heaven she were!" said Lulli, with a force that thrilled for the moment with the fierce vengeance of the South. The gentle dreamer, who would have pardoned the cruellest wrongs done to himself, could hate and could avenge where those he loved were wronged.

"Hush! I *have* loved her. What of her? I can bear all *now*."

"She is Lord Clydesmore's wife."

Chandos swayed forward as though about to fall.

"O God! his wife!"

The words broke from him like a wrung-out cry; in that moment he remembered nothing save the passion wherewith he had loved her, save the beauty which was given to another. He made his way with a blind swaying movement towards the door; he had no sense now except that he must be alone,—alone to bear this crowning bitterness which had befallen him.

"Wait!—wait!" cried Lulli, imploringly. "Oh, Heaven! why would you have me tell you? Wait! You will come back to me?"

Chandos put him aside gently, though he had no consciousness of what he did.

"Yes, I will come back," he answered mechanically, without

the sense of what he promised, as he made his way out once more into the bitter winter air.

He had forgotten all, except that the one who should now have lain in his arms—his wife—had gone, so soon, to the love and the embrace of another!

CHAPTER III.

IN THE NET OF THE RETIARIUS.

Lulli looked for him in vain. He never returned. It was not that he broke wittingly his promise; he never knew that he had made it.

He dragged his limbs, how he could not have remembered, to the only home he owned now,—a pent, dark, dreary chamber in one of the million houses of the crowded streets. There he lay prostrate many days, many nights, with no watcher beside him save the dog, except once in several hours, when the woman of the house came and filled afresh the flagon of water that he drank from eagerly, and looked at him with a pitying wonder, rather for his beauty than for his danger, and went away and left him; for she only knew him as a beggared gamester, and would have turned him, half lifeless, wholly senseless, into the streets, had it not been that, woman like, she was moved to compassion by the physical graces that no ruin could kill in him, and that touched her to pity as he lay unconscious there.

"As handsome as a fallen angel!" she would mutter to herself, while, though but an old, bent, savage, avaricious crone, she would just touch softly with her yellow horny hand the gold locks that women had used to crown with roses. "An aristocrat! an aristocrat! *Mort de Dieu!* how many of them I have seen die off like murrained cattle from their gaming-hells!"

So, just for the sake of his fair hair and his beautiful mouth, like the mouth of a Greek god, she tended him enough to keep life in him like a flickering flame; for the rest, he lay alone in the midst of the peopled city, where he had once reigned supreme, dying in his solitude for aught that any knew or cared. The winter stars shone clear through frosty nights, and looked in on him prostrate there, with his head fallen back, and his eyes without light or sense, and his chest rising heavily and wearily with anguish in every breath the inflamed lungs drew; while the dog watched beside him, moaning now and again its piteous wail, or covering with its caresses the clenched hands and the contracted brow. Winter dawns broke chill and gray; winter days rolled darkly on; winter nights passed with riotous storm or frost so crystal clear, through which the cold moon shone like a shield of steel; he lay there in his loneliness as though in his grave, forgotten, and without a friend in the midst of thousands who had feasted at his tables, in the heart of palaces where his word had been as law. Yet the life in him would not die.

It survived through all; it recovered without aid, without succour, without other comfort than was given him by the warmth of the animal's nestling body and the cooling draught of the icy water. Whilst he lay there, one only, beside the old brown withered crone who tended his wants in the few intervals of her daily toil, came and watched him. One only of all those who had known him and been succoured by him discovered the wretchedness of that last retreat, and stood beside the bed where he was stretched. Hate is swifter of foot and surer of chase than love, and will remember and search, untiring, when love has grown weary and laggard.

One only came and mounted the narrow, dark, rickety stairs, and entered the room where there was no single thing of solace or of mercy except when the clear pale light of the stars shone down from above the endless roofs; one only stood beside the pallet where the man whom all Europe had caressed and honoured had no watcher but a starving dog. Trevenna stood there looking on his work, and was content with it. Philippe d'Orvâle had baffled him of his vengeance on the senseless stones of Clarencieux, but none could take from him his vengeance on the living man whom his patient hate had slain more mercilessly than by a swift and single death-stab.

All the years of subtle dissimulation, of carking envy, of longing thirst to destroy the peace and the brilliance of the life he pursued, of gifts accepted with greed because they were the means of conquest, but loathed and cursed and adding by each one a stone to the load of his hatred—all these were over and over recompensed now, here, in this darkened, poverty-bared garret in the city of Paris, where his prey, in torture and in famine, lay insensible beneath his gaze.

Of all the women who had listened to Chandos' love-words and toyed with the brightness of his hair, there was not one who now held a stoup of water to his lips. Of all the hands that he had filled with gold, there was not one now to touch with pitying caress the brow all bent and dark with pain. Of all the mouths to which he had given food, there was not one now to murmur a gentle word over his misery. Of all the throngs whom he had bidden beneath his roof, of all the lives he had made prosperous and joyous, of all the friends who had laughed with him through the long luxuriant summer day of his existence, there was not one now who asked whether he were living or dead. There was but his enemy, who looked on him and rejoiced.

Every unconscious sigh that broke from him, every movement of his fevered aching limbs, every breath drawn through his agonized lungs, every contraction that knit his burning forehead in his suffering, every look of dull sightless suffering from the blind and sleepless eyes, his foe watched, and was content.

> Quand j'émiettais mon pain à l'oiseau du rivage,
> L'onde semblait me dire, "Espère! aux mauvais jours,
> Dieu te rendra ton pain." Dieu me le doit toujours!

wrote the poet Moreau, dying in his youth of lack of the food dogs rejected. Chandos had thrown his bread on many waters, giving to all who asked, to all who were heavy-laden, to all who lived in darkness and in want. It was unrecompensed and owing to him still. He needed it now, but none repaid it. There only remained with him his foe, who brought him the hyssop and the aloe when he died for a drop of the clear living rivers of the land he had left.

"Water!—water!" he murmured, unceasingly, where he was stretched in his delirious stupor. Trevenna poured some absinthe, and touched his lips with it. He shuddered, all unconscious as he was, and turned with a heavy gasping sigh from the loathsome drink, so bitter, so abhorrent to the fever-burnt, dry lips that longed to steep themselves for ever in the cool flow of sweet, fresh waters. Trevenna smiled.

"Beau seigneur!" he said, softly, to himself, "*I* have drunk bitterness long; it is your turn now."

He lay insensible, defenceless; the width of his chest was bare, and the loud, panting, inflamed beatings of his heart could be seen where it throbbed like the passionate, aching heart of a mured eagle. Trevenna laid his hand on it, and his eye glanced to a knife that lay on the deal board on which his pitcher of drink was set.

"How easy!" he thought. "But I have done better. I have killed him; but I have never broken a law. A stab there would be mercy to him; he shall never get it from me."

Chandos' arm moved where it hung over the bed, seeking instinctively, all dead to what passed or what looked on him though he was, the place whence he was used to take the cup of water which the woman of the house set by him. For the sake of his beauty, she had been pitiful in the last hour, and had sliced in it a few cuts of orange. His hand wandered in a pathetic uncertainty, seeking, as a blind man's seeks, the only thing he had life left in him to long for. Trevenna moved the table from his reach, and emptied out upon the floor the orange-water.

The thirst, parched and delirious as the thirst of men in the desert, consumed his victim with an intolerable torment; his mouth was white and dry as dust, his forehead red with the heated blood, his eyes wide open with a terrible senseless stare: thrown back there, with his bare chest grand as the chest of a Torso, and the luxuriance of his hair tangled and tossed and lustreless, yet retaining the beauty with which nature had created him deathless to the last, he lay like a young gladiator flung down in the sand of the arena by the clinging serpentine coils of the Retiarius. Indistinct, disconnected words broke now and then from his lips, in the wanderings of thoughts that in the misery of that thirst stretched far away into dim memories of his past,—to the forest freshness of English brooks, to the deep still blue of Austrian lakes, to the sweet music of waters falling through innumerable leaves down the steep height of many-coloured stone, of the grand breadth of Euphrates rolling beneath its palms, of the silver-

sheeted Danube lying in the deep shadows of its woods, of the stilly murmur of winding waters in the Italian spring-tide leaf, flowing lazily and softly beneath the green wild arums, and the tawny beds of osiers, and the wreathing boughs of Banksia roses, and the gentle fragrance of the young vine's flower-buds. They were on his lips ever, in longing, fugitive, broken memories,—those scenes and hours of his past, those thoughts of the earth's fair freshness that was dead and lost to him.

Trevenna stood still and listened to the unconscious, unbidden suffering that longed for all that it was exiled from, that spoke in those broken words of all the glories of remembered hours, all the freedom of the forests and the seas, while life was wrung and death embittered by that one poor piteous want,—one draught of the water that beggars might drink from every brook that bubbled. He listened; he could have listened for ever.

He thought of the night when he had ground the Paris sweetmeats into the mud of the gutter, and registered his childish vow; he had kept it to the letter. Happier than Shylock, he had cut the piece of his vengeance from the living heart of his victim, with none to stay his hand.

The gray chilly twilight of a winter's day filled the attic; the light of the first faint moon-ray glistened on the bare walls and the naked floor; the noise, the stench, the noxious reeking air of the alley below could reach but little here; only an oath, or a laugh more ghastly than the oath, pierced the stillness of this chamber in the roof, while through its broken casement the tide of the icy night-wind poured bitterly in on the uncovered chest, on the fevered limbs, on the darkened aching brow.

There was no pang of conscience in the watcher there,—no memory of the friendship that had trusted, of the loyalty that had saved him,—no thought of his own fraud, of his own baseness. He only remembered what this man had been in the spelndour of his promise, in the gladness of his youth, in the brilliance of his renown, and looked at him lying thus, and was content. When the net had wound its coils, and the strangled limbs were powerless, and the strength reeled and fell under its twisting, writhing meshes down into the sand, the Retiarius had no pity, but he looked upward to where the shouts of "Euge!" and the turned-down hands decreed with him no mercy to the vanquished, and he plunged in again and again the fangs of his trident, seeking the last life-blood. So it was now with Trevenna. His net had been deftly flung, and had brought his adversary down, blinded and paralyzed; but he would never have wearied of stabbing again and again, while there was life to feel.

He turned reluctantly away: he could have lingered there whilst there was a pang to watch, a sigh to count. He heard the footfall of the old Auvergnat woman heavily treading over the bare boards. She touched his arm,—a hideous, brown, wrinkled, shrivelled being of nigh eighty years, with avarice in her black glance, and a horrible old age upon her.

"You know him?" she asked.

"I know a little of him," he answered, indifferently. "You had better not keep him here longer than you can help; he may get you into trouble."

He roused her fears and her selfishness, that even this miserable hand might be withheld from easing the suffering they looked on. The Auvergnat looked at him in terror.

"With the police?"

Trevenna nodded and shrugged his shoulders. The old creature, steeped in Paris vice and devoured with Paris avarice, set her teeth hard.

"By the Mother of God! I would have turned him in the streets days ago if he were not as beautiful as a marble Christ."

Trevenna laughed,—a loud, coarse, jeering laugh.

"His beauty! You old crone, what can that be to you? If you were twenty, now——"

She turned on him her darkling and evil glance.

"Women are fools to their tombs. I cannot hurt him; I should see his face for ever."

Trevenna shrugged his shoulders.

"If you wish to serve him, get him let into some pauper madhouse. It is the only thing you can do for him."

She shuddered a dissent.

"They would shear all *that* in a madhouse!" she said, drawing through her hard withered hands the silken fairness of his hair. "When I was young, I would have given my life to kiss that gold,—when I was young!"

The words muttered half sullenly, half longingly, on her lips; the memory made her touch gently, almost tenderly, the locks that lay in her horny palm. She felt for him,—almost, in a way, she loved him,—this battered, evil, savage old creature of Paris; but she would strip the linen from his limbs to thieve and sell, for all that.

"Send him there all the same," said Trevenna. "It is the only place that will shelter him now; except one, to be sure,—the Morgue!"

And with these last words to rankle and fester, and ripen if they should, in the soul of the old beldam who had all to lose, nothing to gain, by the life of one whom she had robbed of every thing, Trevenna went lightly down the high crazy staircase that passed through so many stories to the basement; there was a more intensely victorious glance in his eyes, a smile of tenfold success on his mouth.

And he went out into the night, leaving the man who had rescued him from his prison to perish of thirst, or of famine, or of fever,—to die in the streets, or to live like a chained beast in a madhouse,—whichever should chance to be the fruit and the end of his history.

Trevenna never laughed more merrily at the vaudeville of the Bouffes, never ate his salad with keener relish at the Café Riche, never looked on at Mabille with more good-tempered indulgence for the follies which had no attraction for himself, than he did that

night. Once he laughed aloud, so gaily, so long, that a friend near asked what the jest was. He laughed again.

"I am thinking of Belisarius begging an obole; and of Henry IV. hunted and naked, and dead of starvation, at Spires!"

His friend stared, and thought the wine was in his head. But it was not; he was only drunk with success.

The doom of his prey, however, then at least, was not the madhouse or the grave. He rose from his bed at length, the superb frame with which nature had dowered him resisting all the stress and peril that had sought to undermine it. He wondered wearily why he *could* not die.

The woman who had brought him drink and tended him now and then, for the sake of those lips like the Sun-God's, of those limbs like the Antique, had robbed him of the little he had left while he lay insensible. She said, when he could hear, that she had been at great cost for his illness: he believed her; he could not tell that her pitcher of water had been the sole thing set by his side.

Having lost what he had lost, moreover, what could the few things stolen now be to him?

Thus, when he rose at last and staggered out from the wretched dwelling where he had not a coin left to keep even its roof above his head, he was literally beggared,—beggared almost as utterly as any unknown corpse that lay waiting burial in the dead-house by the Seine.

Since the far-gone German days, when an emperor vainly begged bread at the Church he had endowed, and dragged himself to a vault to die unsepulchred, there had hardly been a fall more vast, more sudden, from the height of power to the depths of poverty.

He went feebly out into the early night, that by a chance was clear, starlit, and mild. Beau Sire looked up at him and moaned; a piteous hunger gazed out from the dog's eyes: he was famished; he had well-nigh starved through all the days and nights that he had kept guard by his master. He had not a sou left him to buy the animal food.

He shuddered as he met the wistful, uncomplaining, hungry eyes,—he who had never beheld pain save to relieve or to release it!

He almost reeled through the first street that his steps turned into; illness had mortally weakened him, and his head swam with the booming noise of the traffic, and with the stench of the crowds. The retriever followed him feebly: famine was telling on its strength; and, like its master, used to all luxury and to all delicacies for so long, it was untrained to want: its eyes were growing dim and ravenous.

Chandos sank down almost unconsciously on some stone steps of the narrow thoroughfare he had wandered into, and drew the dog to him with its fond head nestled in his breast; he could not bear the mute appeal of those longing, piteous eyes. The crowds swept past him,—rich and poor, chiefly the latter, for it was in a densely-peopled and ancient quarter, but all bent fast on their own errands. Two or three turned their heads back over their shoulders to look at him, with his arm resting on the shoulders of the animal that

pressed so closely to him; none did more. They were the hurried pleasure-seekers and the toiling labourers of a great city; they could have no heed of *one* misery amidst so vast a canker of universal want and greed.

The throngs passed him like a throng of phantoms; he thought, as he sat there, of the thousand nights when he had driven through Paris with all the rank, with all the brilliance, of the Court of St. Cloud around him, with no name more famous, with no presence more courted, at Tuileries or Faubourg, than his own.

Now he must let his dog hunger for a broken loaf!

Where he sat, the lamp-light flashed on the collar the retriever wore,—a handsome toy of silver, with his arms embossed upon it,—a relic of his long-lost life. His hand wandered to the padlock fastening it: how many hours it recalled to him, that burnished glittering ornament where it gleamed under the dog's black curls! —hours of fresh autumn mornings among the woods of Clarencieux, of breezy Scottish days, with the splash of the cool brown water, and the flush of a snow-white swan, and the balmy honey-smell of the heather; of glowing deep-hued Eastern sunsets, where the reeds of the Nile trembled in the after-glow, or the curling flight of the desert-hawk soared upward above the ruins of the temples of Jupiter Ammon;—hours when the days and the nights were all too brief for the glad luxuriance of the "life he was gifted and filled with."

Then he unfastened the collar, and rose and crossed the street to a small dark house where he saw that things were pawned,—a minor, obscure Mont de Piété. He entered and laid the toy down.

"Take it," he said, faintly, yet with a new, strange fierceness in the words,—the fierceness that comes with the gnawing of want; "take it, and give me food for the dog."

The owner of the wretched place stared at him, and balanced the collar thoughtfully in his hands, amazed at the richness and the workmanship of the thing offered him.

"It is of value,—of great value," he muttered.

"Give me food for him, and take it."

The words were very low, but there was something of menace in them. The man, old and, though avaricious, not dishonest, for his trade, glanced half frightened at their speaker, and, keeping the collar in his hand, stooped under his dirty counter, and drew out a plate of his own supper,—good food enough, though coarse, and heaped up in abundance. The retriever devoured it as only starvation can devour.

The pawnbroker watched him with a half-stupid wonder, then took three napoleons from his desk and pushed them towards Chandos.

"Your silver thing is worth more than your dog's meat. Take those."

The collar was worth thirty, as he knew well; he voluntarily gave three. He thought himself stupendously honest: so he was, as the world goes.

Chandos drew back with an involuntary gesture of repulsion. Want had not killed in him yet the impulses of his blood; then, as the colour faded, leaving him deadly pale, he stretched out his hand and took it. It would keep life in him for another week.

"I thank you," he said, simply, as he bowed with his old courtly grace to the man who with wide-open eyes watched him with a fascinated amaze.

"*Mon Dieu!*" murmured the pawnbroker, as he turned to leave the place,—"*mon Dieu!* how strange a man! He wants food for a dog, and he bows like a king. Well, I gave him three, I gave him three; I almost wish I had given him more."

Still, even as it was, he felt by that voluntary gift of three he had been virtuous enough. There are many in higher trades than he who consider that to abstain for a little part from all the cheating they have it in their power to do, is to attain a high degree of social and commercial honesty.

Chandos turned to pass from the place. In the entrance stood Trevenna.

Well clothed in dark warm seal-skins that hung lightly on him, with his ruddy colour brighter, his white teeth whiter, and his keen, frank eyes bluer in the winter air and glancing gaslight, he stood in an easy comfort, in a traveller's carelessness; and on his mouth was a lurking smile,—a smile of irrepressible amusement, of ironic triumph. He had watched Chandos many a time in the gambling-hell, in the midnight streets, in the opium-drunkenness, before he had stood and looked at him where he lay insensible on what seemed his death-bed. He had seldom lost sight of him; he had been the only one who remembered him; for hate is more enduring than any love. But now only for the first time Chandos knew that his gaze was on him,—now when the hazard of accident had made his bitterest enemy pause at the door of the pawnshop and look on at the barter of the silver toy.

And not in the first instant when Chandos turned and saw him could he wholly hide the caustic mockery, the victorious success, with which he had watched this last depth of hopeless misery into which the man he had pursued had fallen; not in that moment of supreme domination over his fallen friend could he resist the impulse that beset the single weakness lurking in his bright, bold nature,—the weakness of an insatiable and woman-like avidity of hate.

He stretched out his hand with his old ready, pleasant smile; the palm was filled with some ten or dozen sovereigns and a few crisp bank-notes just won at the whist-tables of the Jockey Club.

"*Très-cher!* when we last met, you used me rather roughly because I offended you with a bit of common sense; the direst insult to you men of genius. But let bygones be bygones. Take what you want, Chandos; you did the same for me once. Take 'em all: do, now. You won't believe how, from my soul, I pity you. Pawned the dog's collar?—oh, the deuce! Is it so bad as that? You look as if you wanted food yourself; why didn't you write to me? I'm a poor man, as you know; but still a five-pound note——"

He knew so well how to pierce with the cruellest strokes the most sensitive nerves of the nature he had studied so long and so minutely. The words might have passed on a stranger's ear as kindly meant, though coarsely phrased; he knew how more bitter than all taunts, more unbearable than all outrage, would they be to the man who stood before him.

He was not prepared for their effect.

Chandos looked at him a moment in silence, then dashed his hand down with his own clenched fist in a sudden blow that scattered in the mud the coins and notes.

"Take care! or you shall have the same on your jibing lips."

The menace was low-breathed, but it thrilled with a fierce intensity of suppressed passion. Trevenna had not calculated or remembered the change that wretchedness and desperation work in the gentlest natures; he had never thought how the softest and most pliant temper, goaded by indignity and altered by circumstance, will turn at last ferocious, like a wild boar at bay.

He stooped, amazed and for the instant speechless, and picked up the scattered money from the doorstep and the street (Trevenna never wasted anything; it was one of the secrets of his success); then he looked up with the insolence of superiority, the coarseness of triumph, that he could no more have spared to the man before him than the hound will spare the stag he has pulled down the gripe of his fangs, the wrench of his jaws.

"On my honour, monseigneur, we can't stand that style now, you know. You've lost your head, that's what it is, with gaming, and drinking, and going to the bad. I'm deuced sorry for you, on my word I am——"

Chandos's hand fell with a swaying weight upon his shoulder and forced him back off the step, off the stones. Under the goad of his foe's insults, under the taunting pity of the man he had saved and enriched, all the weakness of illness, all the dizziness of exhaustion seemed to leave him; he felt as though the force of lions flowed back into his veins.

"Come out—into some lonely place," he muttered in Trevenna's ear. "Come quietly, or I shall find strength to kill you still."

Trevenna turned passively down a solitary, gloomy, unlighted court of a dreary uninhabited fifteenth-century hotel, not far from the Tourelle de la Reine Isabeau, in the ancient Rue du Temple, where the darling of Paris was struck down by the assassins of his foe of Burgundy.

Chandos had never released his grasp upon his shoulder; he forced him slowly on and backward into the darkness of the stone-paved court. Once alone there, in that gaunt black silence, he released him.

"Now tell me why you hate me."

The words were distinctly uttered, and were not loud; yet for the moment of their utterance, as he had done once before, Trevenna felt very near his death. But he was a bold man; he did not quail; he laughed audaciously.

"Why do I hate you? What a question! In the first place, you can't know I do."

Chandos took a step nearer to him.

"No lies! Why do you triumph in my ruin? How have I ever wronged you?"

Trevenna laughed again; his temper was up for once, his savage hatred had got the better of him, his caution was forgotten in the irresistible delight of flinging off the disguise he had worn so long, and taunting and cursing his fallen antagonist openly while he was powerless; even as yonder, under the House of the Image of Our Lady, the boar of Burgundy had commanded the "*coup de massue*" to the fair lifeless body that his brute envy had slaughtered in its youth.

> "I have no title to aspire;
> Yet if you sink, I seem the higher,"

he chanted, with a malicious humour. "That couplet is true to the core. Triumph? I don't triumph. I only offer to lend you a five-pound note; and you look deucedly as if you wanted it. Of course there's something droll in such a fall as yours. I can't help that. To think of all you used to be and all you are! The see-saw of Fortune was never half so strikingly illustrated since the days of Crœsus."

There was very little light where they stood, none save such as the winter moon shed, but there was enough for him to see the face above him, and the words stopped abruptly even on his fearless lips.

He knew that for far less provocation than this blood had been shed a million times since the days of Cain.

"Answer me," said Chandos,—and there was a menace in the patient words more deadly than lies in passion; "answer me. *Why* do you hate me as devils hate?"

"Can't say how devils hate! Don't believe in 'em," said Trevenna, flippantly. His audacious and insolent temper was dared and roused; though he had died for it, he would not have abandoned his victory. "No more do you. They all say now 'Lucrèce' is a deistical work; a season later, it will be atheistical. Trust public opinion to run all down-hill when once it takes the turn. What if I do hate you? I'm not singular. No end of men hate you, *mon beau* Chandos!"

Something of the fierce concentrated passion faded from the face on which the white moon shone; a great weariness of pain came there.

"Hate me?" he re-echoed, dreamily. "I never wronged any man, to my own knowledge. Why should men hate me? Why should you?"

Trevenna shrugged his shoulders, and shook his sealskins with a careless laugh.

"Why? Why, hate's sown broadcast, like so much thistle-down. Why? Perhaps you robbed me of my mistress, or I envied yours. Perhaps you beat me once at *écarté*. Perhaps you only

provoked me with your d—d languor of aristocratic hauteur; that did a deal of mischief for you with a good many. Perhaps you incensed me with the very cursed grace of your generosities, with the very royal nonchalance of your liberalities; *that* annoyed more than you wot of, too. Hate? Why, what is there to wonder at in that? If I loved you, now, you *might* think it out of the common!"

And yet, were love won by friendship, loyalty, and gifts, how had he bought this man's! The memory rose in him where he stood, with the goading banter of Trevenna's ironies on his ear; yet there was too grand a fibre in his nature, too proud a chivalry in his blood, for him to smite his torturer with the past of forgotten benefits,—for him to appeal against ingratitude with the rebuke, "*I served you!*"

"You hate me!" he said, slowly. "*You!*"

It was the only utterance of reproach that passed his lips; in it a world was spoken. Though every other living thing had forsaken him, he would have sworn that this man would have been faithful as the dog beside him. The rebuke, slight as it was, struck such lingering conscience as Trevenna retained, and, with that sense of momentary shame, stung afresh all his greedy triumph, his jeering exultation, his untiring mockery, into their pitiless exercise.

"Well, if I do? What if I do? You'll call me a hound that bites the hand that fed him. Basta! monseigneur; there are some gifts and caresses we can't forgive so soon as we could forgive a kick and a curse. Human nature! You loved human nature; don't you love it now? You were an aristocrat, and I hated aristocrats. *A la lanterne* with every one of 'em. Not but what I'm sorry for you,—deuced sorry for you. I'll try to get you a place, if you'll tell me what you'll fill. There are lots of things they'll give you; the world heartily pities you, you know, though you *were* so imprudent. Besides, if anybody ever hated you, my poor Chandos, they can afford to forget it now. You can't sink lower,—a cleaned-out gamester, a sotted opium-drinker, a beggar in the streets!"

The last words had scarce left his tongue in their insolence of assumed compassion, in their vindictiveness of victorious jibe, when Chandos dashed his hand back on his lips, smiting them to silence, the sole answer that he gave his traitor. His face had changed terribly as he stood and heard; the instinct of vengeance, the instinct to *kill*, had wakened in him; for the moment a very hell of crime was in him.

Trevenna's laughing, sanguine, sun-tanned features turned livid, and set fixed as in a vice; the blow stirred black blood in him. Lightly as a leopard, and as savagely, he sprang forward on the man he hated. For one instant, in the grey gloom of the old lonely court, there was a close-locked struggle; wrong and hate found their last issue in the sheer animal blood-thirst, the wild-brute, untamed instincts that live latent in all men; the next, the unequal contest ended. Just risen from his sick-bed, weak with

long fasting and past illness, fever-worn, and already blind and dizzy with the single exertion of the crashing blow that he had dealt, Chandos reeled over under the fresh strength and supple science of his adversary, and swayed back heavily on the grass-grown stones of the desolate court. The dog, who had wandered away for a moment, sprang back with a lion's bound and a lion's bay as his master fell, rushed at Trevenna, buried deep fangs in his clothes and flesh, tore him with mad fury off Chandos, and stood guard over the senseless and prostrate form;—none could have put a hand on it now, and lived.

Chandos lay there as he had done in the frozen night when Guido Lulli had found him, utterly still, utterly senseless. His face was turned upward, and the moon shone on it with a white, cold, clear light.

His foe looked at him, standing much as in the dim centuries of the Moyen Age, a little farther under the shadow of the tower of fair Queen Isabeau, John of Burgundy had once looked on in the evil night at the stone-dead body of the man his jealous, covetous lust of ambitious envy had pursued and hunted down to the death.

He had his victory, so sweet to him that he never felt the blood pour from his shoulder, where the retriever had seized him and dragged him off.

"How easy to kill him now!" he thought. "Bah! only fools break laws. He will be dead soon enough; he is worse than dead now; he can *suffer*. I wish priests' tales were true, and souls could live. I wish his father's could have power to see him as he lies—see the wreck of him and the ruin."

There was a hard, ravenous, gloating longing in the thought that stretched out beyond the grave. Not content with its work on earth, he looked lingeringly, enjoyingly, reluctant to pass away; but it was rare that caution with him could be conquered by passion or desire, and he knew that if he waited a moment more the dog would be at his throat. He looked once more with a smile—a smile of full success—then went out from the still quadrangle, leaving the chill moonlight to settle in a broad unbroken space where Chandos lay.

That black shade of the old Rue du Temple had seen many murders since the night when Louis d'Orléans was felled down there as he rode from his tryst with Isabeau; but it had never seen fouler murder than that which John Trevenna had done, though he had held back his hand from the shedding of blood, from the breaking of law.

CHAPTER IV.

"SIN SHALL NOT HAVE DOMINION OVER YOU."

THE square court, surrounded with its four blank granite moss-grown walls, with the round pointed towers looming darkly up towards the sky, was wholly forsaken; it was three parts in ruin; no one wandered there save once or twice in the length of the night, when the beat of the patrol's step sounded through it, waking its hollow echoes. It was as still as when, in the mediæval ages, which saw its stones raised, the monks of its brotherhood had flitted ghostlike through its shadows; the pale moon only looked down on it, her spectral swathes of light falling across the leaden gloom of the damp, lichen-covered pavement.

How long he lay there he never knew; hurled back, but swaying over from faintness rather than from injury, he had fallen in a dead swoon, his head striking the stones with a dull sound that echoed through the silence. The fresh night-air revived him, blowing over his forehead and his eyes. He had been struck down heavily, flung in wrestling by a merciless hand; but there was little sense of pain on him as he woke to the knowledge of where he was and of what had chanced; his bodily weakness had prevented the struggle and the resistance that might have been fatal to him. He looked up at the moon shining so far above, so clear, so bright, so tranquil; life seemed to have faded far away from him, and to have left him in the calmness of the grave.

He rose with difficulty—his limbs felt powerless and broken—and he staggered to an old stone bench hard by, where a shattered fountain-spout slowly let fall a stream of water that ebbed away, glistening and shallow, in the starlight over the squares of the pavement. He stooped and drank eagerly from it—it was cold and pure—then sank down on the bench. The dog gathered itself close against him; there was no sound of the world without, save the dull roar of the distant night-traffic and the striking of church-clocks upon the stillness: they seemed alone in the heart of Paris—God-forgotten, man-forsaken, in the midst of the peopled world.

In the solemn night, the opium-mists, the brandy-drugged stupor, the delirium of exhaustion, so long on him, passed away; the thoughts of his mind grew clearer, for the first hour since the day of his ruin. An intense agony was on him,—the deep, still, tearless agony of absolute despair. Yet he seemed to look on the ruin of his life as from a burial-place from which he would never rise; to look on and see the world that knew him no more, the love that had abandoned, the friendship that had betrayed him, as one dead, whose sense and soul returned to behold all that he had cherished revile his memory and forget his loss. He had no feeling of present existence; all he knew was that in the world of men he had no place, that in the hearts of the vast multitude of earth he had no remembrance, that he had perished for ever into oblivion

when the stroke had smitten him down. There, in the stillness and solemnity of night, all things seemed manifest to him; apart from all that he had once known, he seemed to gaze on it and hear its pitiless course pass on, as a man lying paralyzed watches and listens, having no more part or share with the humanity around him than though his shroud had covered him, having no hand to raise if his cheek be smitten, having no arm to lift if a fool mock his misery, having no lips to speak if a lie make foul mirth of his name; lifeless, and yet among the living; slain, and yet alive to suffer.

This is how it seemed to him that he was now. Breath was in him,—that was all he claimed of life; in every other thing he was a corpse; felled into a grave, whence he heard the jibing laughter of those who jested at his fall, the restless feet of those who passed on and bade him be forgot, the stones flung down on him by the hands he had filled with gifts, the kisses that were welcomed by the cheek his kiss had warmed! He was dead; and as the dead he was abandoned and forgotten.

The beauty that had been his was given to the embrace of another; the caress that had been on his lips now burned as softly on the mouth of his spoiler; the roof that had sheltered him from his birth up covered the sleep and the revel of strangers; the treasures that had owned him master, and been gathered by him from north to south, east to west, were scattered broadcast over the earth; the world that he had led knew him no more, and never named his name; the women who had smiled in his eyes, and wound their wreathing arms about his neck, let their bright hair brush the bosoms and their pulses thrill to the whispers of newly-wooed lovers; the men whom he had served followed the light of rising suns, and gave no heed to the eternal night that had fallen for him: all that he had loved, all that he had owned, all that he had lost, was gone to make the joy of other hearts: his fate was the fate of the dead.

He was forgotten in his misery, as slaughtered kings are forgotten in their sealed sepulchres; and his sceptre was not even broken, in pity and honour for his name, above his grave, but passed to the hands of those who dethroned him, bringing them his wealth, his crown, his treasuries, his lieges.

Of all that he had possessed, of all he had reigned over, he could claim nothing,—not even a heart that had loved him.

He knew the width and the depth of his desolation as he had never known it. The man whom he had fed as utterly as he had fed the dog at his feet, when he had been starving and homeless and friendless, the man whom he had lifted from a foreign prison and served as few serve their own flesh and blood, the man who had been his guest, his debtor, his suppliant for the very bread and wine of his table, had turned against him, had deserted him, had cursed him with a foe's hate; no other thing could have told him how utterly he had sunk, how utterly had the world forsaken him.

This man had flung his scorn at him, and had reviled him with a

traitor's pitiless mockery; he knew it was the last depth of his fall, the last and the most infamous witness of his degradation,—as the Plantagenet had known it, when the hound that had been reared by his hand went from him to fawn on the conqueror.

In the state to which his mind had sunk, in the world-wide wreck that he saw around him, the strangeness of Trevenna's hatred struck him little; he did not muse, as earlier he would have done, on what could be the secret and the spring of this coarse, merciless passion of enmity in one to whom his gifts had been as many as the sands of the sea, and whom he had served more truly than he had served himself. He accepted it with the hopeless apathy that comes with despair: all left him, all changed with his changed fate, all condemned him where all had caressed him: it seemed but of a piece with the rest that the greatest of debtors should bring him as payment the blackest of ingratitude.

In one sense only did the full bitterness and shame of Trevenna's taunts strike home to him: they showed him how low he must have sunk that this man could dare revile him. It was less loathing of his foe that rose in him than it was loathing of himself; it was less hatred of his betrayer's infamy than it was hatred of his own abasement. He shuddered as he thought what adversity already had made him; he dared not think what a brief while more might make him.

A few nights more of the life he had led, and he would have been dead at the Morgue, or raving in a madhouse. The lengthened sleep that had preceded the congestion of the lungs which cold and lack of food produced, had saved him; had stilled the fever in his blood, and freed his reason from the half-drunk phantoms in which it had lost itself, and been broken and blinded for so long. He rose from his wretched bed but the shadow of what he had once been; but the look was gone from his eyes which had made the *fille de joie* in the gaming-den thrust the opium to him, and bid him not live to be what he must be.

Her words came back to him now where he sat, the serene, cool night, through which the stars alone looked, stilling the riot of his mind with the sense of their own eternal calm. "What he must be!" He knew well enough what that was.

A little while more of such a life as he had led since the day of his ruin, of those hideous orgies, of that drunken stupor, of that horrible and ghastly union of poverty and intoxication, of despair and vice, and the lowest creature that crawled through the midnight snows to devour the stray relics of offal that the curs had left would be as high as he; a little more, and every better thing would be crushed out in him, and the vilest den would spurn him from it to die in the river-slime like a choked dog.

Had he embraced dishonour, and accepted the rescue that a lie would have lent him, this misery in its greatest share had never been upon him. He would have come hither with riches about him, and the loveliness he had worshipped would have been his own beyond the touch of any rival's hand. Choosing to cleave to the old creeds of his race, and passing, without a backward glance,

into the paths of honour and of justice, it was thus with him now. Verily, virtue must be her own reward, as in the Socratic creed; for she will bring no other dower than peace of conscience in her gift to whosoever weds her. "I have loved justice, and fled from iniquity; wherefore here I die in exile," said Hildebrand upon his death-bed. They will be the closing words of most lives that have followed truth.

What could he be? What could the future, if he lived for one, hold for him? Misery, privation, abandonment, solitude, the ceaseless thirst of vain desires, the unending void of eternal losses, the haunting knowledge of all he might have been. These were what faced him; these were what alone awaited him. If he lived on, he could but look for these, and for worse yet,—he to whose beauty-steeped senses every passing pain had been unknown, every sight of deformity been veiled! He thought of the old sacred legend of Herodotus,—how, when the Argive mother prayed at the temple of Juno in Argos for the highest blessing that mortals can attain to be bestowed on Cleobis and Bito, her prayer was granted: her sons fell asleep to wake no more. He knew now its terrible truth, its eternal meaning,—he who had thought ten thousand times the span of his rich and shadowless life would be too brief a space to spend on earth! Death;—it would not come to him; and he longed for it as a man in a desert land, shipwrecked amidst the burning wealth of colour and the cruel wantonness of beauty round him, longs for water as he perishes of thirst.

Still yet, even yet, a pulse of life stirred that he could not with his own hand slay; it was the power of the genius in him. Dulled, drugged, stifled, paralyzed, beneath the weight of infinite wretchedness, the frozen apathy of despair, the fever of vice, the pangs of famine, it was not dead, and the taunts of his foe had stung the pride sleeping with it into fresh existence. The insult of his debtor and his traitor had been the crowning agony of his passion; but it brought back life in him, as the plunge of the surgeon's steel will bring it back and cut the cords of death by the very force and suddenness of its stab.

A gentler hand could not have saved him or arrested him; the unpitying and brutal thrusts of his adversary roused him ere it was yet too late.

There, in the silence, in the solitude, with the dark walls brooding above him, and the cold winter's moon looking down, something of the grandeur of resistance, something of the calm of endurance, came on him. Should this man see him die in a bagnio? point to him as one so womanish weak that the first stroke of calamity had slain him? mock him as a madman, who, having squandered his birthright, flung his manhood and his mind and his soul away with it?

He had been gifted with such a genius as was in Alcibiades when he listened in love to the golden words of his master, or heard the shouts of the people give him to triumph as his chariot-wheels crushed the wild thyme they threw. Should he perish, like Alcibiades, in the arms of a courtesan, lost to all that earlier and holier

time? A greater inheritance than that which he had squandered had been given him in his intellect; a greater suicide than that of the body would be the suicide that now was destroying the mind with which nature had dowered him.

Freedom was left him, and intellect,—the two first treasures of life; whilst the powers of his brain were still his, and his liberty, the poet would have said,—

"Then first of the mighty, thank God that thou art."

There are liberties sweeter than love; there are goals higher than happiness.

Some memory of them stirred in him there, with the noiseless flow of the lingering water at his feet, and above the quiet of the stars; the thoughts of his youth came back to him, and his heart ached with their longing.

Out of the salt depths of their calamity men had gathered the heroisms of their future; out of the desert of their exile they had learned the power to return as conquerors. The greater things within him awakened from their lethargy; the innate strength so long untried, so long lulled to dreamy indolence and rest, uncoiled from its prostration; the force that would resist and, it might be, survive, slowly came upon him, with the taunts of his foe. It was possible that there was that still in him which might be grander and truer to the ambitions of his imaginative childhood under adversity, than in the voluptuous sweetness of his rich and careless life. It was possible, if—if he could once meet the fate he shuddered from, once look at the bitterness of the life that waited for him, and enter on its desolate and arid waste without going back to the closed gates of his forfeited paradise to stretch his limbs within their shadow once more ere he died.

There is more courage needed oftentimes to accept the onward flow of existence, bitter as the waters of Marah, black and narrow as the channel of Jordan, than there is ever needed to bow down the neck to the sweep of the death-angel's sword.

He rose slowly and looked upward; the hours had fled, the city was sleeping, the busy feet of the crowds were silent, and the hush of an intense rest was on the world around him. Beneath it vice might yet riot and misery still moan; but it was towards dawn, and the noiseless peace was unbroken; the trembling rays of moonlight shivered on the water's surface, and far above, shining from the deep, blue-black, fathomless vault, the lustre of the stars burned through the brilliancy of winter air,—a myriad worlds uncounted and unknown. Men had abandoned and hope forsaken him; on the earth he had no place, and in human love no memory; but there, under their solemn light, their own tranquillity encompassed him; solitude lost its desolation in the eternity and the immensity of that limitless space, of that unknown deity.

A lifetime suffered here,—what was it? the span of a single day in those bright worlds beyond the sun. In face of that changeless and endless calm, the burden of so brief a labour might well be

borne; sufficient if through travail the faintest shadow of likeness unto truth were gained. To many in their suffering that unalterable and eternal serenity of nature is pitiless, is unendurable; they find no mercy in it, no shelter, and no aid; to him it was divine as consolation, divine with the majesty of God. Above the fret and vice and wretchedness of earth it brooded so still, so cold; it stretched so boundless and so deathless out into the infinite realms of space!—from it there seemed to breathe the promise of a future when men should live "sceptreless, free, uncircumscribed;" from it there seemed to steal the bidding, "Let the world abandon you, but to yourself be true."

Though he had lost all, there were with him still the dreams of his youth; the world forsook him, and the width of the earth stretched before him,—a desert laid waste, barren and pitiless as stone, through which he must pass, wearily and in solitude, to live and to die alone; yet he arose with his dead strength revived, with the calm of a passionless endurance fallen on him.

He accepted the desolation of his life, for the sake of all beyond life, greater than life, which looked down on him from the silence of the night.

BOOK THE FIFTH.

CHAPTER I.

IN EXILE.

It was sunset in Venice,—that supreme moment when the magical flush of light transfigures all, and wanderers whose eyes have long ached with the greyness and the glare of northward cities gaze and think themselves in heaven. The still waters of the lagunes, the marbles and the porphyry and the jasper of the mighty palaces, the soft grey of the ruins all covered with clinging green and the glowing blossoms of creepers, the hidden antique nooks where some woman's head leaned out of an arched casement, like a dream of the Dandolo time when the Adriatic swarmed with the returning galleys laden with Byzantine spoil, the dim, mystic, majestic walls that towered above the gliding surface of the eternal water, once alive with flowers, and music, and the gleam of golden tresses, and the laughter of careless revellers in the Venice of Goldoni, in the Venice of the Past;—everywhere the sunset glowed with the marvel of its colour, with the wonder of its warmth.

Then a moment, and it was gone. Night fell with the hushed shadowy stillness that belongs to Venice alone; and in the place of the riot and luxuriance of colour there was the tremulous darkness of the young night, with the beat of an oar on the water, the scent of unclosing carnation-buds, the white gleam of moonlight, and the odour of lilies-of-the-valley blossoming in the dark archway of some mosaic-lined window.

One massive and ancient house towered up amidst many another palace,—a majestic, melancholy place, with shafts of black marble and columns of porphyry, and deep sea-piles that the canal bathed into a hundred umber tints. Long ago some of the greatest of the oligarchy had held there their highest state; now it was scarcely habited, left to decay, and lost in gloom,—a sepulchre of dead glories, while the insolence of foreign mirth and the shame of foreign arms outraged the captive and widowed beauty of the Adriatic spouse. It was lonely and unspeakably desolate; with the gliding sheet of the still water beneath its walls, and the long sombre lines of forsaken palaces stretching beyond it on either side, and facing it in the splendour of the early moon. Yet it was infinitely impressive, infinitely grand, standing there with its mediæval sculptures touched with rays of starlight, and its costly marbles washed by the ebbing of the tide.

At one of its lofty, narrow casements a man leaned out into the fragrant spring-tide air; he had risen from close studies in the chamber within—vast in space as a king's throne-room, barren in garniture as a contadina's hut—to watch the fading of the sun, the sudden loss of all the wealth of colour in the grey hues of evening; and he lingered still, now that the night had wholly fallen. In that stillness, in that soft lapping of the water, in that glisten in the distance of the silvery lagune, in that scarcely-stirring wind filled with the breath of opening blossoms, there was a lulling charm,—there was the echo of a long-lost youth.

His face was of a great beauty; though many years had passed over it, time could touch and could dim it but little; but in the eyes there was the exile's weariness and the deep thought of the scholar; on the mouth there was that look which comes of bitter pain borne, of strong victories wrung from calumny and poverty and hard defiance,—such a look as Dante might have worn, yet less harsh, though not less mournful, than the Florentine's. He looked down on the deep and sleeping shadows, on the gliding darkness of the canal below; the sweetness of the young night, the Adriatic fragrance of the sea-wafted air, brought him a thousand memories across the desert of long years.

Through his mind floated such thoughts as wearied Cleon:—

> "Indeed, to know is something, and to prove
> How all this beauty might be enjoy'd is more;
> But, knowing naught, to enjoy is something too.
> Yon rower with the moulded muscles there,
> Lowering the sail, is nearer it than I."

There had been a time when every breath of life had been for him

enjoyment, rich as the god's life of Dionysus. In moments such as these he longed for that dead time, as the poet Ovid, in the ice and winter storms and snow-bound forests of his Danubian exile longed for the golden sunlight, for the purple pomp, for the glad idolatry of the vine-crowned land that knew his place no more.

"Am I any nearer the ambitions of my youth than I was twenty years ago?—am I as near?" he thought. In the voluptuous hush and fragrance of the Venetian night his years seemed cold and fruitless and heavy-laden.

Where he stood, in the dark arch of the window, the measured music of oars beat the water; beneath the walls several gondolas gilded; on the silence rose, chaunted by the mellow voices of young Venetians, a hymn of liberty. They might pay to their tyrants well-nigh with life for its singing; yet that knowledge gave no tremor to the cadence that rang so bold and so clear in the stillness. Passionate, yet unspeakably sad, rich as the world of colour that had just passed from the world, but melancholy as the breathless stillness of the calm lagunes, the ode of freedom was sung by the lips of those who knew themselves slaves,—young, fresh voices, the voices of youth and of vivid ambition, yet touched to a deeper meaning and vibrating with a hopeless desire; for they were the voices also of forbidden hope, and of thoughts held in bond and enchained. It was the "Io triumphe" of liberty,—

> "Thou huntress swifter than the Moon! thou terror
> Of the world's wolves! thou bearer of the quiver,
> Whose sun-like shafts pierce tempest-tossèd error
> As light may pierce the clouds;"

but also it was the lament of Leopardi,—the lament most weary, most utterly desolate, of all upon earth,—the lament of men whose hearts ache for lofty aims and noble fields, and whose lives are denied all purpose and all effort,—of men whose country is in thraldom.

The chaunt ceased; all the many and melodious tones which had risen on the night and swelled louder and sweeter down the canal, till the boatmen far off heard the echo and gave it back, were suddenly silenced, as a choir of song-birds will cease at noontide. In the prow of the foremost vessel a young Venetian rose, the gleam of his auburn hair and the kindling light on his face like some old painter's Gabriel or Michael yonder in the gloom of the ancient churches. He lifted his eyes to the arch of the casement where he stood up in the white, tremulous lustre of the moon.

"You have striven for the freedom of thought and for the liberty of judgment," he said, simply. "Venice, who has lost them both, loves you for that which you have loved, and gives you thus the only homage she now dares."

Without pause, without a word more, the rowers bent above their oars, the gondolas floated down the dark surface, the young impassioned faces of the singers turned backward with a fond and reverent farewell as their vessels swept into the shadows, so deep

so rayless, underneath the walls of the abandoned palaces: it was all they had to give, that song of freedom in a fettered land.

He to whom they gave it thought it more than the gift of crowns laid at his feet. It touched him strangely with its suddenness, with its meaning,—this gratitude rendered to him by the young, pure, patriot-voices of those who might pay the cost of that night's utterance with the pain of captive's bondage or of exile's banishment. It was more worth to him than any diadem with which the world could have anointed him,—this recognition of what he sought, this knowledge of why he laboured.

It came to him as answer and rebuke to the thoughts which had been with him as that unbidden music rose upon the night. To enjoy was much; but to seek truth and labour for freedom might be more.

"One fetter of tradition loosened, one web of superstition broken, one ray of light let in on darkness, one principle of liberty secured, are worth the living for," he mused. "Fame!—it is the flower of a day, that dies when the next sun rises. But to do something, however little, to free men from their chains, to aid something, however faintly, the rights of reason and of truth, to be unvanquished through all and against all, these may bring one nearer the pure ambitions of youth. Happiness dies as age comes to us; it sets for ever, with the suns of early years: yet perhaps we may keep a higher thing beside which it holds but a brief loyalty, if to ourselves we can rest true, if for the liberty of the world we can do anything."

For he was one of those who to the cause of freedom and of truth bring the wealth of their intellect and the years of their life, and receive but little requital save a sullen reverence wrung from an unwilling world, and the railing bitterness of the crowds who abhor light and hug error and tradition close. His words stirred with shame the hearts of nations steeped in lust and lethargy and the greed of gold; and they awoke to hoot and hiss the one who dared rouse them from their torpor or arrest them in their money-changing. His thoughts sank down into the unworn hearts of youth, and they shook themselves free from the ashes of superstition and the chains of creeds; and the priests of superstition cursed him. His utterance probed the surface of the world, and, piercing its panoply of wordy falsehood, brought to it the clear, keen light of scepticism and truth; and the world was weary of him, it slept so much more soundly beneath the veil and in the darkness. He loved men with a pity and a tolerance no trial could exhaust; he would have led them, if he could, to the search and to the knowledge of other things than their gold-thirst and their paradise of lies; and they turned back to their treasuries of money, to their granaries of hypocrisies, and would have none of him. Their ears were wilfully deaf, their eyes were wilfully blind, their feet loved the trodden paths, their hands were busy grasping their neighbours' goods; they wondered at and they reviled him; they would not follow to the mountain air he bade them breathe; they stayed in the mud, seeking a coin He was alone. The world gave him fame grudg-

ingly, reluctantly, because it could not withhold it longer; but it left him alone and condemned because he saw no holiness in the shrine of gold, and no right divine in the tyranny of tradition.

He was alone; eagles that love the high light-penetrated air, that has no mist and clog of earth-born dust, must ever dwell in solitude. Yet now and then there came to him, as there had come from the voices of fettered men to-night, an echo of his own thoughts, a recognition of his own labours, and these sufficed to him.

They who labour justly for the sheer sake of truth find no present reward: will they hereafter find it? A weary question;—one to which men never yet have gained an answer.

CHAPTER II.

IN TRIUMPH.

THE stars, as they shone on Venice, shone likewise farther northward on one of the mighty, labyrinthine, ink-black cities of labour. The heavy pall of smoke loomed over the forests of roof, of chimneys, of factories, of churches; the bells of the latter were chiming with incessant, joyous, pealing clangour, bells that rung a chime called of God every seventh day in the midst of the worship of Mammon, bells put up in many a steeple, iron offerings to Deity by iron hands that wrung the last bitter drop out of poverty, and clammed the last starveling of labour, and bought redemption cheaply by a sop to a parish priest.

The bells were rhyming wildly, with no pretence, happily, that it was in the honour of Godhead now,—tossing upward through the weight of murky air wave on wave of changing sound, of riotous triumph, of passionate, mirthful, random, uncouth music like the harmony of Thor's great hammers. Under the sea of iron-echoing noise vast crowds pressed tumultuous, in a grim triumph like that of the metal melodies. Their hard, keen, indomitable faces were sharp-set as the knives they made, were massive as the iron they worked; and on them was the flush and the pride of victory. It was on the night of a great election, an election that had followed in Lenten time on a sudden and unlooked-for dissolution,—an appeal to the country as agitating as it had been unforeseen; and they had brought to the fore their champion, their idol, the most famous of all his party. In this vast city of Darshampton there was but one name and but one sovereignty,—his. The people had crowned him; and who should dare to discrown?

In one of the chambers of a magnificent hotel, he stood in the dusky red glow of the sunset that burned through the smoke-laden atmosphere and fell about his feet as though it too were eager to seek him out and smile on him,—this man, omnipotent in all he undertook. A crowd of friends were about him, breathless in congratulation on what was but a repeated triumph, waiting in

delighted warmth of welcome on one in whom they saw a deity more potent than all the gods of Semitic or Achæan creeds,—the deity of a supreme Success. Throngs had been about him from earliest days,—throngs of friends, of flatterers, of men who believed in him honestly and would have fought for him to the death had need been,—of men who believed in nothing except the divinity of success, and followed that idolatrously in him because they saw his acumen never fail, his fortune never change. The city would give him its banquet to-night; his party brought him devoted gratitude and ecstatic pride, the country bestowed on him scarce less admiration; young men looked to him as their leader, elder looked to him to reap the harvest of the seed they had sown in the future; the aristocracy dreaded, the plutocracy bribed, the multitude adored him. He was a great man already; later on he would be a greater,—popular beyond all conception, triumphant in whatever he essayed.

The shouts and the cheers of the populace swelled louder and louder; the clamour was hoarse, Titanic, almost terrible in its imperative power, as the voice of the People always is when once it thunders through the land,—imperative for murder as imperative for bread, mighty and resistless alike in both. Here it rose with one accord, with one word,—his own name. *They* had brought him in,—those men with their horny, supple hands, and their blackened, resolute brows, and their limbs like the limbs of the old Berserkers, those men of the Black Country, who grasped so doggedly at truths sharp as steel, yet grasped but at half-truths, and, so blinded, reached but hatred of an Order when they thought they grasped at liberty for Mankind. The shouts swelled louder and louder, more and more full of peremptory demand; they had brought him through, or thought they had, and clamoured for their idol.

He humoured them ever, as a lion-tamer humours his cubs, that he may cut the claws and grind smooth the teeth and make the brave beast lie down passive as a spaniel at his beck, and turn to profit the world's terror when he shows how docilely he guides the wild, tawny, desert-king, that at his bidding would leap forth and tear and slay.

He went out on the balcony, and the din of the acclamations rolled up to the red evening skies like thunder. In the large square before the building, and in the transverse streets that crossed and met, the dense multitudes were gathered, wave on wave of human life, surging in in swift succession, and stretching far and wide away beyond the sight, like a stormy and restless sea. Their dark faces, swarthy and begrimed, shrewd and stern, were turned upward to the balcony with an eager pride and pleasure, while from the brawny chests of the iron-workers that tremendous welcome rang. The sun shone more burnished red in the crimson, heavy west, and, slanting in broad, glowing, dusky streams of light athwart the misty gloom, fell on that ocean of upraised faces, and across the eyes of the man they honoured,—eyes so keen, so mirthful, so unerring, so full of sagacious life, of triumphant victory.

"He is the man for the Future," said one stalwart worker, with

the breath of the furnace-blasts and the blackness of the iron-foundry upon him, yet who read Bentham, and Fourier, and Mill.

One, less book-wise and more world-wise, pierced nearer to the secret of success, to the root of popularity, as he answered,

"He's more: he's the man for the Present."

"And the man for the People!" shouted a third, behind them. The words were caught up and echoed on all sides, till they ran through the packed thousands like electric fluid, till from the whole of the swaying gigantic mass the words broke unanimously, rising high above the pealing of the bells and the strife of the streets, hurling his name out in that grim, passionate, furious love of a multitude which has ever in it something, and wellnigh as much, of menace as of caress.

He nodded to them with a pleasant, familiar smile,—such a smile as a boy gives to his favourite and unruly dogs; then he stood more forward against the iron scrollwork of the balcony, looking down on that movement beneath him, and spoke.

Not for the first time here, in Darshampton, by many, the ringing, metallic, clarion-roll of the voice they knew so well stilled them like magic, thrilled them as hounds thrill at the notes of a horn, and held them in check as the horn holds the pack. He spoke as only those can speak who have been long trained to the public arena, who have studied every technicality of their science and every weakness of their audience, who have brought to it not only the talent of native skill, but the polish of long usage, the power of assured practice. He spoke well,—keen, trenchant, vigorous, humorous oratory, English to the backbone, coarse in its pungency, withal, here, as it could be scholarly elsewhere, striking to the heart of its subject as surely and as straightly as the arrow of Tell to the core of the apple. There was a breathless silence while he spoke, the trumpet-like tones of his ringing voice penetrating without effort to the farthermost of the listening throngs, the Swift-like humour and wit shaking sardonic laughter from the brawny chests of his hearers, the biting and incisive reasoning drawn in by them as eagerly as town-dusted lungs draw in the salt, fresh breezes of the sea. He was their master, though they thought themselves his electors and creators; and he played at will on them, as a strong, skilled hand plays on a stringed instrument, moving it to what cadence he chooses. They listened in devoted silence, only broken by tumultuous cheering, or by the hoarse, gaunt laughter that was ominous as any curses raised against what they hated. He spoke long, though so succinctly, so pungently, that the minutes of his speech seemed moments; then ceased, while the red sun-glow still strayed to his feet, and the chimes of the bells swung wild delight, and the shouts of the populace teeming below deafened the air with his name.

He laughed to himself as he bowed many times his thanks and his farewell, then sauntered from the balcony into the lighted and crowded room, glancing back at that shifting sea of upraised, earnest, hard-lined faces in the dusky heat of the fading sun.

"D—d rascals, every one of you, my friends," he thought, "or out-and-out-fools; God knows which. Rave about oppression and the wrongs of Capital to Labour, while you send your children to sweat, at five years old, in furnaces, and threaten to kill your brother if he don't join your trade-union and strike when he's told; clamour for the rights of man, and worry your brains after political economics, while you think all the 'rights' centre in scribbling your name in a poll-book and talking mild sedition in a tap-room! Oh, you precious fools! how we use you, and how we laugh at you!"

For he was not even wholly true to those who were so true to him; and he had no belief even in their thorough, heartfelt earnestness, erring from imperfect vision, and distorted from imperfect education, but sincere and true in its widest errors.

They thought they had made him what he was; he knew that they were his tools, his wax, his weapons.

He glanced back once on to the vast, oscillating crowd in the reddening angry sunset mist, and the laugh of a consummated victory, the insolence of a secure triumph, were in the backward flash of his eyes, mingled, too, with a certain proud power, a certain exultation of self-achieved distinction. His name was still echoing to the skies from the lungs of the close-packed throngs.

"Who dare sneer at that name now?" he thought; and there was in that thought the glow which Themistocles felt when they who had exiled him as a nameless thing of the people, to wrestle with the base-born in the Ring of Cynosarges, welcomed him in the city of the Violet Crown as the victor of Salamis, the slayer of Persia.

Then he went within from the stormy clangour and the scarlet flush of evening, and was feasted through that night by the men of the mighty town, nobles who hated him bearing their part in his honour, rivers of wine flowing to his toast, the crowds of the streets knowing no theme but his present and his future, the nation on the morrow saying, as the city said to-night, "He is a great man; he will be still greater."

BOOK THE SIXTH.

CHAPTER I.

"PRIMAVERA! GIOVENTU DELL' ANNO!"

Down at the foot of the mountain-slopes reaching to Vallombrosa, hidden away in the deep belt of the chestnut-forests, was a little Tuscan village. Sheltered high above by the pines of the hills, and veiled from every glance by the thick masses of the chestnut-leaves, no strange foot ever scarcely wandered to it. It was out of the route of travellers; it had slumbered here for ages: it had been here when Milton looked on the Val d'Arno; it had been here when Totila thundered at the gates of Rome; it had been here when Plautus caught in the colour of his words the laughter, the mirth, the tavern-wit, the girls *à libre allure*, the wine-brawls, and the Bacchan feasts of the Latin life; it had been here through all changes, but it had never changed. Beliko, it had been sacked by Cæsar, razed by Theodoric, visited by Stilicho, plundered by the Franks of Carl; but it was still the same, surviving all ruin, and covered in the spring-time with so dense a leafy shade that the grey tint of its stone, the red brown of its few roofs, showed no more than the oriole's nest through the boughs. The purple plums of the olives ripened and were gathered, the red osiers changed to tender green, the grapes were garnered with the vintage-tide, the cattle came down the hill-sides when the sun sank low, the chestnuts turned to ruddy brown and broke their husks and fell upon the moss; a few lives were born, a few lives were buried. These were all the changes known there, the changes of the night and day, of the seasons of the year, and of the coming of life and of death. The light of the after-glow shone on it, the scorch of the later summer parched its fields and woods, the snows of winter lay upon its hill-top and gleamed between the darkness of its pines, the breath of the spring breathed the flower-glory over its land, and uncurled the white spiral blossom of its arums in the water-bed; but through wars and rumours of wars, through the Campaign of Italy as through the wars of the Great Captain, through the ravages of the Cinque Cento as through the raids of the Goths and the Gauls, the little woodland nook of Fontane Amorose remained unaltered, as though the foot of Dionysus when it had pressed its sward had bidden its blossoms keep an eternal bloom, and the Dryads and the Satyrs, driven from every other ancient

haunt, still lived beneath the green fronds of its trailing plants, and laughed amidst the bronzed gold of its autumn vines.

It was in the "mezza notte d' Aprile," beloved of painters, hymned of poets, which makes of all the Southern land one fresh and laughing garden. Upward yonder, higher still on the hills, there was some little chillness lingering still, and the air blew keener through the aisles of pines; but here, midway in the sloping of rich mossy greensward, deeply sheltered by its beeches and chestnuts and by the slopes of its fir-woods, the delicious spring of Italy was in its fairest, with the purple orchid glowing in the noon, and the delicate wind-flower fanned by the breeze, and the young buds of the vine opening in the clear and perfect light. A few miles from the clustering dwellings of Fontane was a grove of beech-trees, always, save at the height of noon, dark as twilight; for the branches were dense, and the trees towered massive and many. Yet in the heart of them was a nook fit for the couch of a Naiad,—fit to have had laid down in it the fair lifeless limbs of Adonis. In the shade of the leaves the moss and grass were ever fresh; the sun-tan of midsummer never brought drought there; anemones and violets, and all wild flowers that bloom in Tuscan woods, filled it with odour and colour, and through it welled the bright clear water of a broken fountain, so old that underneath its moss might still be traced the half-effaced Latin inscription. By it perhaps Virgil once had learned, or Claudian rhymed his epic; at its spring the beautiful evil lips of Antonina might have drunk, or, lying beside them, Lucretius might have thought of the Etrurian shades, looking far down into those deep, rayless aisles of beech, sublime and sad as his own genius. Where the water rippled, losing itself among the mosses and the orchids, a glory of sunlight came, touching to silver the wing of a wood-pigeon poised to drink, lending a warmer blush to the white wild rose as the rifling bee hummed far down in its violated chalice, and shedding its ripe gold on the hair of a young girl leaning motionless there.

The birds, fearless of her presence, paused in their flight to glance at her; the nightingales, thinking it night in the beech-shadows yonder, sung her their softest songs; the butterflies alighted on the flowers her hands held; they knew her well, they loved her; they were her only playmates in the long Italian day. Arum lilies, and the pale-green blossoms of the ivy, and anemones glowing crimson, and the emerald coils of moss, were in a loose sheaf on her lap; she sat in a day-dream, watching the mystical flow of the water as though its patient music could sing her the hymn of her future.

She was very young, but on her beauty was the Tuscan glow; and she had already the tall, slender, yielding, voluptuous form of the South. In the hair, like a chestnut that has the fleck of the sunlight upon it, in the deep eyes with their blue-black lustre and their dreamy passionate lids, in the lips so soft, so proud, so mournful, in the brow, broad and thoughtful like an antique, in the brilliance and the light upon the face, were all the Southern types: it was only in the fairness of the skin that something more Northern

might have been fancied; in all else it was the rich and sunlit loveliness of Italy.

Her hand rested on the stone that bore the Latin words, all covered now with the wild growth of ivy; her gaze rested on the water sparkling so bright in sunshine here, flowing so dark beneath the grasses there; the sheaf of woodland wealth rested listlessly on her lap. She leaned there, in her childhood's carelessness, in the classic solitude, against the black shades of the beech-woods that closed her in as in a temple, and only let the flood of sun pour down across the ruined Roman fountain and the countless flowers at her feet.

She was fair as Sappho while yet love was unknown and a child's laughter amidst the roses of Ionia was only hushed now and then by vague and prescient dreams; she was fair as Héloïse while yet only the grand serenity of the Greek scroll lay opened before her eyes and no voice beside her had taught a lore more fatal and a mystery more mournful than the wise words of Hellas.

She was very lovely, motionless here where no sound came except the lulling of the water and the gliding noise of a bird's wing, where the tender green blossoming vines hung coiled above her head, and where the deep bronze of the beech-belt drew round her the gloom of the night.

Where she leaned thus, one passing through the denseness of that gloom saw her, unseen himself, and paused; he thought of Proserpine among the flowers ere the cruelty of fate fell on her. The young life and the grass-grown ruin, the aisle of colour and sunlight, and the mass of enclosing shade, were a picture and a poem in one,—the gladness of a Greek idyl, with the mystic darkness of a Northern Saga.

Once he would have lingered there, drawn the ivy-wreaths from the hands, wooed the eyes from their musing gaze, paused beside her in the leafy peace,—once, in the days of his youth. Now he looked an instant, thought how fair she was, and passed onward down his lonely path far into the beechen shadows.

CHAPTER II.

CASTALIA.

SUDDENLY, without a warning, the radiance of the late day clouded. Before the mules could patter along the stony roads, before the contadine could reach homeward as they came from antique Pelago, before the workers could leave the olive-fields and vineyards, before the mild-eyed oxen of the Apennine could be driven through the rank hill-grass, without warning, the mighty clouds gathered, the night fell, the fires ran down the heavens, the storm broke.

Through it, as best he might, he who had an hour or two before

passed through the moss-grown path of the beech-woods, made his backward way. It was now peril to life and limb to be out in its fury; the melon-plants were torn up by their roots, the twisted olives writhed into tenfold contortion, the peaceful bubbling waters turned into angry torrents, the young trees were uprooted and hurled down the steep descents; the darkness was impenetrable, except when the lightning lit the whole land in its glare, and the rushing of stones and of boughs and of saplings, as the winds tore them up and whirled them on its blast, roared with a thunder only drowned in the peals that shook from hill to hill and echoed through the solitudes of the forest.

He could not even tell his road; he had lost its certainty in the blackness around. Unknown to himself, he had wandered back once more into the beech-glades, and was lost in their impenetrable shades, instead of holding on his upward road along the hill-side through the pines. As he went, feeling his way slowly through the dense hot gloom, he trod on some fallen thing that his foot crushed ere he felt it. He stopped and stooped to it; he thought it might be some frightened hare or some large bird struck in the storm and entangled in the yielding, clinging moss. The darkness was dark as that of a moonless midnight; he had no sense to guide him but the sense of touch. The grasses and the flowers, all bruised and beaten, met his hand; then, as it moved farther, it wandered to the loose trail of some floating hair, and passed over the warmth of human lips and the outline of a woman's cheek and bosom. He thought of the Tuscan child whom he had seen in the sunset light.

The heavy tresses lay in his hand; he could not tell whether she were living or dead, she was so still in the darkness. He passed his hand gently over her brow, she did not move; he spoke, she did not hear; he drew her loosened dress over her uncovered chest, she did not feel his touch. There was warmth from the lips on his palm, there was a faint pulsation in the heart as he sought for its throb; that was all. Else she lay, as one dead, at his feet in the blackness of the driving storm, in the din of the echoing thunder.

The fire flashed from the cleft skies; the blaze of an intolerable light poured down. In it he saw her, and the broken stone of the Latin ruins, with the water gliding into its deep, still pool. He paused a moment, leaning over her with the thick wealth of the hair lying in his hand; he could not leave her, and succour there was none. With little thought, save such an impulse of pity as that in which a man might raise a fawn his shot had struck, or a song-bird his foot had trodden on, he stooped and raised her in his arms. Her head fell back, her limbs were powerless, she lay passive and unconscious in his hold; forsaken here, she must perish; death was abroad in every blast, in every flash. He hesitated no more, but leaned her brow against his breast, and, thus weighted, went on his toilsome and perilous way through the beech-glades. He knew his road now; that was much: and he was not very far from his own home. He forced his passage

slowly and with difficulty through the denseness of the woods. It was a tedious and dangerous toil. But still as he went he sheltered her, and he pierced his road at length through the aisles of the beech-wilderness till he came into the broken arches of what had once been stately Roman courts. So far near his refuge, he paused a second to take rest; the vivid lightnings filled the arcade with their glow, the peal of the storm rolled above; he leaned against a marble shaft and looked down on his burden. Her head rested on his breast as peacefully as though she slept upon her mother's heart; the long dark lashes swept her cheek; her lips were slightly parted with a warmer breath. There was a touching sanctity in the unconscious rest, a plaintive appeal in the extreme youth and in its death-like calm.

"Poor child!" he thought, "she may live to wish she had been abandoned there to die in the peace of her childhood."

In other years his lips would have called back the sleeping life with a caress; now he looked on her with a passionless pity, gentle because profoundly sad, sad because she had so much youth, and that youth was a woman's.

Then he went onward through the shattered arches that were canopied and covered with impenetrable ivy and feathery grasses tinted to every hue in the flashings of the light, and entered by a low side-door the first court of a Latin villa half in ruins, crossed the court, and passed into the first chamber. It was long and lofty, and had in it the decay of greatness; fragments of a perfect sculpture were upon the walls, a fresco in hues fair as though painted but yesterday covered the ceiling, the pavement was of mosaic marbles; these were all of its old classic glories that time had left untouched: for the rest, it was an artist's studio, a student's library, strewn with papers and with books, with here and there a cast or bronze; at the far end a lectern with a vellum manuscript open upon its wings, and in the midst an Etruscan lamp swinging from on high and shedding a subdued silvery light and a soft perfume on the gloom. Here he brought her, and laid her gently down upon the cushions of a couch. She knew nothing of what was done with her. He went to a flask of Montepulciano standing near, poured some of the wine out, and touched her lips with it. She drank a little, by mere instinct; the warmth revived her; her lids trembled, then unclosed, and her eyes looked out with a dreamy, bewildered sightlessness.

"What is it? Where am I?"

"Have no fear, my child; you are safe now. I found you in the storm, and brought you here."

Her glance met his; consciousness came to her.

"You saved my life, eccellenza! How can I thank you?"

"By telling me you are unhurt."

She looked at him with that awed wistfulness, that earnest wondering gratitude, of a child.

He touched the bright masses of her hair, moving them back from her brow—she was so young; he caressed her with his hand as he would a wounded bird.

"I fear you are in pain? There is a bruise on your temple and you were senseless when I found you. Do you suffer now?"

"Oh, no! not much. You brought me from the forest? How good! how merciful!"

She stooped her head with the supple grace of the South, and kissed his hand with the reverent supplication and thanksgiving of a young slave to her owner. He drew it from her quickly.

"My child, do not pay me such homage for a mere common charity. What creature with the heart of a man could have left you to perish alone? The blow must have struck you down senseless. Was it from a bough do you think?"

She shuddered with the memory.

"I cannot recollect. The storm came up from the back of the woods before I saw or thought of it; it burst suddenly, and as I went something struck me down; whether it was the flash or a fallen branch, I can remember nothing since, till I awoke—here."

She lifted herself a little, and glanced round the chamber with the startled wonder still in her eyes, as of one who wakes from a deep sleep in a strange scene; her glance came back to him, and dwelt on him with a venerating marvel and admiration: she knew his face well, though until that day he had never seen hers. Her sweeping lashes were weighted and glistening with tears as she looked—sweet, sudden tears of an infinite gratitude for her rescue, and to him by whom she had been saved. She was very fair in that moment.

Her hair, all loosened by the wind, fell backward and over her shoulders, like a shower of molten gold; the warmth of the chamber, and the surprise of her waking thoughts, gave a glow like a wild rose to her cheeks. Some of the ivy-coils that she had dropped in her haste to rise and flee from the storm had caught in the gay colour and the white broideries of her simple picturesque dress: an artist would have given a year of his life to have painted her as she was then, in the shadowy chiar'-oscuro of the lamplight, in the marble waste of the far-stretching, half-ruined chamber.

A dim fugitive memory wandered before him with the glance of her eyes,—a likeness that he could not trace, yet that pursued him, rose before him with the earnest, haunting beauty of her face. Far down in his past it lay; he could not disinter it,—he could not give it name or substance,—but its shadow flickered before him. She was like something remembered, like something recovered.

"You are tired and exhausted; lie still," he said, as she strove to rise. "They shall bring you food; I need some myself; and in an hour the storm may lull, perhaps. May I ask who it is that my roof has the honour to shelter?"

She looked at him still with that wistful wondering homage; she was shy with him, and the language of courtesy was unfamiliar to her; it was very new to her to be addressed so.

"What is your name, *poverina*?" he asked her.

"They call me Castalia."

"Castalia!—a fair and classic name! And what else?"

"Nothing else, eccellenza."

Her voice was very low; her head sank, the tears glittered thickly on the length of her lashes. In the answer she had told him all the history she had.

He was silent a moment, regretful that he had pained her; his voice was very tender as he spoke again.

"And your mother—is she living?"

She shook her head.

He looked at her with a deep pity, this child with the brilliance of Southern suns about her, and a fate so lonely and so blighted at the outset.

He asked her no more; but, as a Tuscan woman answered his summons and brought into the chamber a tray of fruits, and macaroni, and truffles, with some flasks of Italian and Rhine wines, he served her with his own hands as assiduously, as reverently, as any would serve a queen. And as the rest and the food revived her more and more, and more and more restored the animation to her lips, the lustre to her eyes, she seemed, in the antique classic Doric charm of the silent chamber, like some gem of the old Venetian masters set in the white coldness of the marble walls—like some lustrous, gold-leaved, Italian flower, sprung in its bud from the grey solemnity, the sublime decay, of Roman ruins.

He wondered whence she came and what she was—this Tuscan child with the grace of a daughter of the Antonines, who was without a name; and once more the memory which had haunted him rose again, not to be grasped, but lost in the mazy shades of a far-distant past.

The storm was at its height, there seemed little chance of its abatement; the mighty din of its thunder rolled like the roar of a hundred battles, and the moaning and trembling of all the beech and chestnut woods were heard on the stillness. She shuddered as she listened.

"Ah! I should have been lying dead in all that terror now, but for your pity!"

"Do not think of it," he answered soothingly. "Let the storm rage as it will, you are safe here with me. Tell me, where is it you live?"

She looked at him with an intense sadness, very strange upon the glow and glory of her youth; and, though the flush grew hotter in her face, it was proud and still in its pain.

"Illustrissimo," she said, softly, for there was a breathless awe of him upon her, mingled touchingly with a spaniel-like trust, "you ought to know whom your house shelters; it is only just. I have no name; I have no history. My mother died when I was a few months old; she came a stranger, and the village knew nothing of her, only this—she was not wedded. The Padre Giulio and his mother adopted me; they have been very good. The name they found on me was Castalia. I have nothing more to tell."

The simplicity of the words lent them but the deeper sadness, the restrained pain, the half-haughty, half-appealing shame, with which she spoke them, gave them but the stronger pathos. They touched her listener greatly.

"Thank you for your confidence, my fair child," he answered her, with a pitying tenderness in his voice—she was so young to be already touched with life's suffering and the world's reproach. "You do not know your history; there is room, then, to hope it a bright one."

She shook her head.

"Illustrissimo, how? It began in shame; it will end in a convent."

"A convent? Better the tomb!"

He spoke on an impulse. To cage her to that living death of the veil seemed barbarous as to shut away in darkness, till it died, one of the golden-winged orioles that fluttered through the length of a spring day below the slopes of Vallambrosa.

"Yes! better a thousand times! In the grave one sleeps unconscious! But, forgive me, eccellenza; I weary you. Let me go."

"Go! with the storm at that height? You would go to your destruction. No living thing could pass from here to Fontane in such a night. Wait a while; it may lull presently. And give me no titles of deference; I can claim none."

"You must be a great lord?" she said, softly and hesitatingly.

He smiled wearily.

"My greatness—if I ever truly had any—departed from me long ago. I am no noble. I am little richer than your peasants of Fontane."

She glanced round the chamber. To her, after the bare simplicity of the Fontane hamlet, the frescoes, the sculpture, the mosaics, though they were but the relics of Latin ruins, made it seem a palace; then her glistening meditative eyes dwelt on him.

"You are lord of yourself, at least?" she said, lingeringly, with the *naïf* expression of a child.

"I have but a rebellious subject, then," he answered, with a tinge of sadness that did not escape her. "But, *poverina*, you look feverish and tired. I have been thoughtless for you. Are you in pain?"

She smiled at him—a smile of infinite patience and sweetness, that brought back in his thoughts once more a memory he could not follow.

"Not much: it is nothing."

She would not confess that, in truth, an intolerable pain ached through her bruised temples, and that an utter exhaustion was stealing fast upon her.

"Lie still, then," he said, bending over her; "the tempest is at its worst now. Take no heed of me, but sleep, if you can."

She thanked him, and obeyed him; she watched him with a reverent, wondering homage; she revered him already like a king, like a deity.

She had passed all her young years in the chestnut-shadows

beneath Vallombrosa, and she had far too much innocence, far too much faith, to think of harm that could be done her in this solitude, to feel anything but a sublime, devoted trust in the stranger who had saved her life. Moreover, the weariness that was growing on her, the sleep that weighed down her eyelids, the reaction from the shock and peril of the night, left her little sense save of a lulling peace that surrounded her, of a voice that soothed her like music, of a wish to be silent and still, and keep unbroken this soft charm.

He left her, and went to the lectern at the farther end of the room, where the vellum scroll lay, a disputed manuscript of Boethius. On the wide stone hearth some pine-logs were burning, for the evenings were chilly, though the days were so warm; the aromatic odour of the lamp filled the room with a sweet, faint incense; the shadows were deep in all the farther parts of the hall, only about the hearth was the ruddy, flickering glow of the pines; all else was in gloom.

The hours passed uncounted; the thunder had somewhat lulled, but the winds were a hurricane, and the drenching downpour of rain scoured the land and howled through the pine and the beech woods. It was a night which broke the mountain firs like saplings, and wrenched up the grey writhing olives by the roots, and laid the young birds stone dead by the score. No human thing could venture out in it and be sure of life. The twelfth hour struck from the campanile as the lull of a moment succeeded to the roar of the storm; he lifted his head from where he bent over the lectern, and looked at the young companion chance had so strangely brought there. In the glow of the embers she lay, in her delicate, richly-hued beauty, a child in her innocence and her tranquil rest, far more than a child in her grace and her charm,—a thing of light, and life, and colour, and youth, in the cold, classic solitude of the lonely and half-ruined hall, whose cracked mosaic had been worn by the passing of so many banished feet that had trodden through their brief day, and had glided onward down into their tombs. He watched her with an indefinable pity, with a fugitive, intangible remembrance pursuing him; her brief story was so mournful, and the memory that pursued him was so strong, though he could find it no clue, and would give it no substance. As a chord of music, as a flower blooming in a desert place, as a sound of harvest-chant or spring-bird's singing, will bear us back to long-gone hours, so the sight of her bore his thoughts backward to years that were sealed for ever,—thoughts that thronged on him, many, and embittered by their own dead sweetness, as the thought of all that he will never again see comes on the exile with the mere scent of faded leaves brought to him from the summer woodlands that hear his step no more.

In them he was lost, as he leaned against the broad bronze wings of the lectern-eagle, with his eyes on the ring of ruddy colour that circled her like a halo. The storm shook above the low, flat roof of the Latin villa, breaking on it as with the force of a waterspout. He roused himself and went near her.

"She cannot go out in such a night as this," he thought.

She slept still, softly as a child, a proud, resigned sadness, like the memory of her stained birth and lonely fate, on her face. He was loath to break her rest, yet he knew that to let her sleep on here would be to let the coarse tongues of the mountain peasants touch even her defenceless childhood. He stooped and passed his hand lightly over her brow. At the touch, slight as it was, she wakened instantly; the blue-black lustre of her eyes startled into consciousness, the flush on her cheek bright as the scarlet japonica blossoms. She started up, ashamed.

"Oh, eccellenza, forgive me! I have been asleep!"

"Naturally, after your danger and your fatigue. It was the best restorative you could have. It is midnight now, and the storm is scarce lessened——"

"Midnight? The Padre will be so wretched! What will he think? Let me go; pray let me go."

"Impossible; you would go to your certain death. I could not venture myself in such a night; you hear the hurricane? You must remain with me."

"With you?"

"Surely: I would not let a dog leave my roof in such weather as this is. Besides, you are miles higher on the slope here than Fontane; the return to the village would be impossible for those far hardier than you."

She looked at him with a wondering awe; he seemed to her such an emperor as Marcus Antoninus, who had laid down his pomp and come to dwell a while like other men. The deep-blue, weary, brilliant eyes that gazed on her made her think of the serene, imperial eyes of Augustus.

"I am a total stranger to you, it is true," he said, gently, misinterpreting her silence; "but you are not afraid to remain in my house? I am only here for a *villegiatura*, and the place is desolate enough, but it will at least give you shelter."

"Afraid? Afraid of *you?* What could I fear? You saved my life; it is yours to command. All is—I cannot thank you enough."

The words were very touching in their liquid Tuscan, in their complete innocence, and in their perfect trust.

"You have nothing to thank me for; a mule-driver or a charcoal-burner must have done for you what I did," he answered her, his voice unconsciously softening. "And now go to rest; you want it. I will send the women to you, and they shall remain in your chamber; for you are not well enough to be left alone."

"Ah, eccellenza, how good you are!" she murmured. A few years older, and she would have been grateful to him in silence, better knowing the motive of his words. "But indeed I am strong now; we, below Vallombrosa, have the strength of the mountain air, and—shall I not trouble you with staying here?"

"Far from it; you bring your own welcome, like the birds that come and sing under our windows. Good-night, and sleep well."

He held his hand out to her; she was but a child to him, and a child who had been sheltered on his breast through the driving of the storm. She stooped with the exquisite softness of movement of Southern women, and touched the hand he gave her, lightly and reverently, with her lips.

"I would thank you, eccellenza, but I cannot."

She did thank him, however, better than by all words, with that hesitating touch of her young lips, with that upward glance of her eyes, languid with sleep and fatigue, yet lustrous as the Tuscan skies by night,—eyes that seemed to him to have some story of his past in their depths.

Then he summoned the women to her, peasants who dwelt in the villa, and she left him.

He, having surrendered to her, though she knew nothing of it, the only habitable chamber that the half-ruined villa afforded, stretched himself in the warmth of the pine logs on the wolf-skins strewn before it. She had brought back to him, why or whence he could not tell, memories that he would willingly let die,—memories that, through the length of weary years, burned still into his heart with unutterable longing, with intolerable pain.

In the loneliness of the old classic hall, in the leaping light of the pine flames, throngs of shadowy shapes arose around him,—the shapes of his past, summoned by the light of a child's smile.

She, meanwhile, lay wakeful, yet dreamy, gazing out at the unfamiliar chamber and the swaying figure of the peasant woman keeping watch over her, and nodding in her sleep. Her thoughts were steeped in all the wonders of legendary lore, and she fancied some enchantment had been wrought in her since, out of that awful forest darkness, she had been brought to this charmed stillness, in which only one remembrance was with her, the remembrance of the musing, lustrous, weary eyes that had looked so gently on her, of the voice that had soothed her terror and her pain with an accent softer than she had ever heard. She thought of him, and thought, as one other had once done before, that he was like the Poet-king of Israel, but having known the bitterness of abdication, having known the ingratitude of the people. Then her musing became a dream, and, with a smile upon her lips, she slept under a stranger's roof till the tempest had passed away and the dawn was bright.

As she awoke, the morning had risen. The sun broke in full glory over a splendid mass of purple cloud and tumbled storm-mist that glowed in magnificent colour beneath the newly-risen rays. The earth laughed again even amidst her ruin,—her ruin of crushed olive-buds, and uprooted saplings, and trees rent asunder, and nests flung down, with the young birds killed, and the mothers flying with piteous cries over the wreck; but the wheat-sprouts were too low to be harmed; the vines, though they trailed and hung helplessly under the dead weight of rain-drops, were still only in blossom; the watercourses made the wilder, merrier music, filled to overflowing, and laying in swathes the rank grasses of their beds; the mules began to patter over the broken paths, pick-

ing their careful way over the dislodged bolders of rocks and the deep channels of brimming brooks. Beneath Vallombrosa the morning was fair and sun-lightened again, deadly though the tempest had been over-night, and rough work of destruction though it had wrought. With the sun she rose; her youth, like the youth of the spring and the earth, the brighter for the storm and the danger gone by. There was the flush of waking childhood and of past sleep upon her cheeks, and her eyes had the gladness of a wondering dream in them, as she found her way, marvelling if she dreamed a fairy-tale, down some broken marble steps and out into the air.

CHAPTER III.

"GIOVENTÙ! PRIMAVERA DELLA VITA!"

THE full light poured into the open *loggia* before the half-ruined courts and halls of the Latin villa. Within, the one spacious chamber, with its frescoes and the mosaics, its books and scrolls, was bare enough. But the world of blossoming spring, of morning mists, of lavish foliage that opened out before it, made ample amends for any poverty and decay of the interior; and it was perfect for a *villegiatura*, this deserted place that Roman pomp had once filled in Augustan days.

In this loggia, reading, her host sat,—a man no longer young, though as yet there was no silver amidst the fair and golden length of his hair; a man of a grave grace, of a serene, meditative dignity of look and of movement that had in it something that was very weary, yet something not less grand, not less royal: he might have been a king in purples rather than what he was,—an exile, and poor.

The book was open upon his knee, but his eyes were not upon it for the moment; they were resting on the gardens without,—gardens wild, forsaken, uncultured, but only the more beautiful for that. What he watched in them was the passage of the young Tuscan flitting through them with the freedom of a chamois in her step, and all the languor of a dew-laden flower in her loveliness.

Sixteen years beyond the Apennines bring womanhood; they had brought it to her in the loveliness nature had dowered her with, but in all else she was young as a child,—she had never wandered from the chestnut shadows of her village, had but dimly heard of another vast world beyond the beech-woods, had known no friends but the birds who sang to her, no pleasures but to watch a blue-warbler shake his bright wings in the myrtles, or to look deep down into the heart of a passion-flower and build a thousand fancies from its mystic burning hues. She was a child with the beauty of a woman; there could be no greater peril for her.

He thought so as he saw her in this deserted garden. Art had no handling with her; the pure hill-air had made her all she was;

and she had the unconsciousness of some rich-plumaged bird, now floating softly through the sunlight, now pausing on the wing, now alighting to drop down in happy rest in a couch of feathery grasses.

He gazed at her as she wandered through them, that exquisite ease in her step which many a royal woman has not, which a contadina may have balancing on her dark imperial head a pannier of water-melons. The lizards did not hurry from her, but watched her with curious eyes; the timid hares let her stoop and stroke them; the old owls blinking in the ivy let her lift her hand and touch their crests; the wood-doves flew about her and pecked the buds from the boughs she held up to them. She bent over the black swollen water, and saw her own reflection laurel-crowned as the branches met above her head; she gathered the lilies of the valley, the buds of Banksia roses, and the young green ivy-blossoms, and crowned herself with them till the wreath was too heavy and shook all her glistening hair downward in a shower of gold, like a picture of Flora. Then, lastly, she sank to rest on a grey rock of fallen sculpture, the crown of flowers still above her brow; and after the glad, thoughtless pastime of a child, the proud and profound sadness that usually in repose was on her face succeeded it with a charm not the less great because so sudden.

It was like the sudden fall of evening over the brilliance and the glow of her own Tuscan landscape.

As he saw it, he left the loggia and went towards her. She did not hear his step till he had approached her close; then she sprang up with the swiftness of a fawn, and with words of gratitude made only softer by the awe of him which lent her its delicate coyness.

"I have been watching you for the last half-hour, Castalia," he said, gently. "I am glad you could find such companions in my flowers and my birds; there is little else here fit for your bright youth."

She put her hands up hurriedly to remove the dew-laden wreath of bud and blossom; she had forgotten it till his speech brought it back to her thoughts. He put out his own hand and stayed her.

"Not for worlds! I wished a Titian lived to paint you! you look like a young priestess of Flora. But, tell me, what spell have you that tames the lizards, and stills the hares, and brings all the birds to your hand?"

She lifted to him her musing eloquent eyes, grave as a child's when he pauses to think.

"I do not know, eccellenza, unless—it may be because I love them so well."

His face grew a shade darker and yet softer; her words recalled the fond belief of his own youth.

"You think love begets and secures love? I thought so once."

"And was it not so?"

"No; but—that knowledge should not kill love in us; there is much that is worth it, if there be much that is not. Because a viper turns and stings you, it would be wild vengeance to wring the wood-pigeon's neck."

He spoke half to his own thoughts, half to her; she regarded him with a reverent, grateful, wondering gaze; in her little beech-forest nest of Fontane she had never seen anything like him. She who had known but one bent old priest, and brown, brawny muleteers and vintagers from whom she shrank as the white sea-swallow shrinks from the hard beak and cruel pursuit of the kestrel, thought almost he must be more than mortal.

"I ought to leave you, 'lustrissimo?" she said, hesitatingly. "I have troubled you so long."

"Do you wish to leave me?"

"Wish? oh, no!"

"Well, do not leave me yet, then. Come within, and let me see, though no Titian, if I can paint you with your crown of flowers. Your Padre Curato will feel no anxiety; I sent a messenger to him to say you were here."

The gravest contrition stole over her face; she looked penitent as a chidden child.

"Oh, 'lustrissimo! I had forgotten him. How ungrateful, when he is so good! How selfish one grows when one is happy!"

"Then are you happy with me?"

"Eccellenza," she said, under her breath, "it seems to me that I have been happier than in all the years of my life."

The reply pleased him. He had always loved to see happiness about him,

"I am glad it should be so. And do not believe that happiness makes us selfish; it is a treason to the sweetest gift of life. It is when it has deserted us that it grows hard to keep all the better things in us from dying in the blight. Men shut out happiness from their schemes for the world's virtue; they might as well seek to bring flowers to bloom without the sun."

He spoke again rather to his own thoughts than to her; but she understood him. This young Tuscan, lost amidst the chestnuts beneath Vallombrosa, had in her the heart of a Héloïse, the mind of a Hypatia, though both were in their childhood yet.

"Excellenza," she said, hesitatingly, "that is true. If we keep light from a plant, it will grow up warped. When they condemn, do they ever ask if what they condemn had a chance to behold the light? Perhaps—perhaps if my mother had been happy she would not have been evil, as they call her?"

The colour burned hotly in her face, but her eyes were raised in wistful entreaty to him; it was but very vaguely that she understood the shame that she was made to feel was on her birth, but very dimly that she comprehended some vast indistinct error with which her dead mother was charged.

The question touched him with great pity.

"*Poverina*," he said, caressingly, "do not weary your young life with those subtleties. You do not know that error lies at all upon your mother's history; who can, since you say that history is wholly unknown,—even to her very name? It may be that the thing the world—your little woodland world, at least—blames in her, was some unrecognised martyrdom, some untold unselfishness. At all

events, be she what she will, *you* are stainless and blameless; all you need seek is to be so for ever."

She looked at him with passionate feeling.

"I thank you, eccellenza, more for those noble words than for the life that you saved me."

The brief answer was very eloquent,—eloquent of her nature and of her gratitude. He said no more, but led her within to the old hall, only fit for a summer residence for an artist, or a scholar sufficiently content with its classic charm and forest wildness to bear its scant accommodation. An easel stood before the open colonnade facing the gardens; he paused before it, and glanced at her. A lovelier theme never lured any painter's brush, with the fresh crown of lilies and rose-buds and light-green blossoms of ivy shaking their dew upon the gold-flaked shower of her hair. He looked at her, then he threw aside the colours he had taken up.

"Twenty years ago I could have given your picture there," he said, half wearily. "Now I have not the heart to paint you, my fair child. I have not the great inspiration,—youth."

Twenty years ago he would have found no hour more beguiling than that spring morning with the young Tuscan, bringing the bloom of her beauty and of her crown of flowers out on the canvas; now it only recalled to him all he had lost.

A shadow stole over her eyes; he saw it, and turned back to the easel.

"Are you disappointed?"

She looked beseechingly in his face.

"I never saw any paintings except those in our little chapel."

"No? Well, then, I will try and give you your desire."

He took the brushes up again, and, standing before the easel, sketched her as she leaned against one of the pillars of the colonnade, the rich glow and warmth of her young face but the brighter for the whiteness of the lilies and the deep green of the leaves that circled her hair. He had both the skill and the habit of Art; and the impassioned brilliance of her beauty, with the coronal of blossoms weighting her forehead with the weight of all diadems, rose gradually under his hand out of the sea of brown opaque gloom on which it was painted. The hours passed, and the picture grew; it beguiled him for the time of heavier cares, and won him out of deeper thoughts; yet ever and again, as he lifted his eyes and glanced at her, the weariness which had made him turn from the task came over him again. He thought of so many golden hours, when faces as fair had bloomed to fresh life thus on his canvas, and the glory of his youth had been with him to lend its sweetness to the eyes, and teach the language of love to the lips, of those he painted. The soft labour only recalled to him so many days that were dead.

The noontide was intensely still, the heat of the sun quivered down through the open arches of the colonnade; the picture grew clearer and richer beneath his hand, and the blossoms faded where they crowned her hair. She untwined them, and touched them mournfully.

'Ah, eccellenza, they are all dying!

He smiled, not without sadness, too, though it was for deeper things than the flowers.

"Never mind; you have had their sweetness. Be content with that. Nothing endures."

"But it is better never to have had them than to see them withered!"

"I doubt that. If we should have been spared much pain, we should also have missed much joy."

His thoughts were with other things, though he spoke still in the figure of the flowers. He had seen his own crowns wither and fall and be trodden under foot, yet it was better to have worn them. She looked at him in silence, reverently, wonderingly; she mused on what his history could be; she thought him a king in exile. So, in a sense, he was.

There was an infinite shyness of him in her that gave her tenfold more charm, it was so innocent and so full of religious veneration. He seemed to her like the archangels of her Church, so full of majesty, so full of pity. She thought with him of all the grand, serene, lonely lives that she had read of in the Latin legends.

He rose, and turned the easel to her.

"Castalia, do what even wise men never do; see yourself as you are."

She came forward, and looked, as the sun fell full on the work of a few hours, and her countenance changed as by magic; a breathless surprise was on her lips, a scarlet flush upon her cheeks, the light of an immeasurable admiration and amaze beamed in her eyes. She stood entranced at the likeness of herself, as, with its diadem of blossoms, it gazed out at her from the brown shadows of the background.

"Well?" he asked her, smiling.

She turned to him bewildered and beseeching.

"Oh! 'lustrissimo, can it be? Am I as beautiful as *that*?"

"Did the river and the fountain never tell you so before?"

Her head drooped, the colour in her cheek deepened; her innocent delight had had no thought of vanity, but at his words she remembered what she looked on was—herself.

"And yet it *is* beautiful!" she murmured, very low, as though in apology. "And if I be really like it——"

"What then?"

A prouder glory flashed into her face; she lifted her head with the royalty of a daughter of emperors, mingled with a great softness of regard.

"Then, I think, if I could once see the great world I might reign there, and I might win some love, and not be scorned as peasants scorn me here."

He paused a moment; the words touched him to compassion.

"Would it not be so, eccellenza?"

"Yes," he answered, slowly; "doubtless it would. But do not wish it, if you be wise. Your diadems would not be so pure as the

one that lies withered there; your brows would soon ache under them, and for the love——"

"Ah!" she said, softly, whilst the glow faded, and her eyes filled with tears as she spoke with the pathos and the guilelessness of a child, "I long to be loved! All the children of Fontane have their mothers, who look brighter when they see them near; but I am all alone. I have been alone so long!"

The words had an intense and touching piteousness in them; a harder nature than her listener's was would have been moved by them. How could he find the cruelty to tell her that the chances were as a million to one that the only love she would ever meet in this world beyond the pine woods to which she vaguely looked as the redresser of her wrongs, would be one less merciful to her even than the bitterness and loneliness which now visited on her innocence and her youth the unproven error of her dead mother? Twenty years before he would have heard her with little thought, save to let his lips linger on the brow whence the faded ivy-buds had fallen, and murmur to her the tenderness which her unawakened heart longed for, as an imprisoned bird longs for the shelter of summer leaves and the whispers of summer rivers; now such a thought as this was distant from him as the wide unknown world was far from her.

But pity her he did, profoundly. This nameless, motherless child, with her radiant grace and her proud instincts, was as desolate as any chamois-fawn lost on the hills and driven as an alien from every herd with which it seeks a refuge.

"You will have love, some day, *poverina*," he said, gently, "and as much as you will; you will hardly lift such eyes as those to ask for it in vain."

She sighed, and her head sank lower, while she looked still at the painted likeness of herself. She was unaware of any tribute to her beauty in his words; she thought he meant that some, one day, would pity her.

"Ah," she answered, wearily, "where is the worth of love, if with it is scorn?"

The thoughtless taunts and the careless jests which among the peasantry had been cast at her from her birth up as a foundling—rather in the mothers' jealousy of her face and the children's resentment of her love of solitude, than from any cruelty or any real contempt—had sunk deeply into her nature, rousing rebellion and disdain well-nigh as much as they caused sorrow and a vague sense of shame.

He saw how great a shipwreck might be made of her opening life, even from the very purest and loftiest things in her, if this outlawry banned her long—if this passion of mingled defiance and humiliation were fostered by neglect. He spoke on that.

"Scorn! Why dwell on scorn? It is unworthy of you. It is a word that may bring a pang to those who merit it by their own ill deeds; it need have no sting for any other. Keep your life high and blameless, and you will afford to treat scorn with scorn."

She did not reply to him with words, but she flashed on him with an answering glance the night-like lustre of her eyes, in an eloquence, in a comprehension, in a promise, that accepted his meaning far more deeply and more vividly than by speech. He saw that she might be led by a cord of silk—that she would not be driven by a scourge.

He stood a few moments in the shadow of the colonnade, later when she had left him, looking at the painting that had grown out of the deep, sombre backwork by the work of his own hand, the head alone luminous, from the veil of gloom around it, with its spiritual radiance, crowned by that wealth of flowers; he looked, then turned it aside towards the wall, so that the richness of colour no longer smiled out of the opaque shadows, and went within to his solitude. That face, gazing out from the darkness under the diadem of woven blossoms, seemed like the phantom of his own dead youth.

CHAPTER IV.

"SEIGNEUR! AYEZ PITIE."

NEVER in the rich days of the Cinque Cento, or the Dandolo age, when the cities of Italy were filled with pomp and mirth and music, when the mighty palaces were wreathed with flowers that lent their bright blush to the white stone and glowed over the black marbles, when the dark arches framed hair, like the gold arras that draped the balconies, and lips ripe as the scarlet heart of the rose that glowed in their bosom, was any beauty rarer or more lustrous than that of the young Tuscan who had grown up under the forest-shadows below Vallombrosa, scarce more tended, not more heeded, than one of the passion-flowers that bursts into its glorious bud unseen by any eyes above the broken stone of some ruined altar of Pan. Though her years were so few that the fulness of her beauty might yet be scarcely reached, she had already the splendour of a Titian picture on her, the superb grace, wild as a deer, proud as the daughter of Cæsars, that here and there still lingers, as though to verify tradition, in the women of Campagna or of Apennine.

The loneliness of her childhood, the consciousness of a ban placed on her, the haughty instincts which had wakened in self-defence against the shafts of scorn, the solitary and meditative life which she had led, had lent her a certain patrician pride, a certain thoughtful shadow; a wistful pain sometimes gazed out of her eyes; a lofty rebellion sometimes broke through the dreaming gladness of her smile. She was happy, because she was young, because she was sinless, because she had the innocence which finds its joy in the caress of a bird, in the radiance of a sunset, in the mere breath and consciousness of existence; but she had the pang of wounded

pride, the burden of a scarce-comprehended shame, and the vague, bitter, impassioned longing of a mind too ardent and too daring for its sphere; and these gave their character to her face, their hues to her youth; these made her far more than a mere child, however lovely, can be. She was like Héloïse ere her master had become her lover, and while her eyes, as they gazed on the Greek scroll or the vellum Evangeliarium, were brilliant with the light of aspiration and dark with the thoughts of a poet, but had never yet drooped, heavy with the languor and burning with the knowledge of love.

From the aged priest she had learned all his scholarly lore that plunged deep into the life of the past, and drank deep of Latin and Hellenic culture; he had loved the rugged roads of wisdom, the unfathomed sea-depths of knowledge, the buried treasures of cloister folios and of crabbed *copia*—she had loved them too. With no other in the obscure hill-side, to which fate had condemned him, to give him sympathy or understanding in these things, the stern old man had taken eager pleasure in steeping with them the virgin soil of a young and thirsty mind. In the bare, grey, narrow chamber of his dwelling, with its single lancet window through which crept the mellow sunlight from the cloudless skies, the fair head of the child Castalia, with its weight of burnished tresses, had bent above the huge tomes and the century-worn manuscriptum for hour on hour, like Héloïse in the cell of the canonry. She had a passionate love of those studies: and, whilst they filled her mind with great and impersonal thoughts, they did much to console her for her fate, and much to enrich her intelligence far beyond her years and her sex. They, and the beauties of the earth and the seasons, were her sole pleasures. The priest's mother, under whose roof she lived, was nearly ninety years, decrepit and harsh, who, well as she loved her foundling in her heart, could be no aid or associate to her. With the peasantry, the people who maligned her unknown parent, she would have no converse in their flower-feasts and their vintage celebrations. She lived alone with the learning of dead ages and the fragrance of a forest-world.

Some such an isolation would have maddened or ruined; Castalia, with a singular vividness of imagination, and a proud patience beneath the passionate warmth of her nature, had received through it a higher character than any other and happier life could have developed.

She was a poem, with her slight, sad, all-eloquent story, that needed no detail to fill it up; with her touching desolation of circumstance and of destiny, and her brilliant youth that in its elasticity and its euthusiasm broke aside all barriers of doom and pain and found its careless joy God-given from a song-bird's carol, from a cloister-scribe's story, from the tossing of a sea of green rushes in the wind, from the dreams of an outer world, unknown and glorified in fancy into paradise. She was a poem in the spring-time of her life and in the spring-time of the year.

The smile of women's eyes had no beckoning light for him, the whisper of women's allurement no sorcery for his ear; he had been

a voluptuary in an earlier time, but he had passed through bitterness and poverty, and sensuous charms had ceased to hold him. Yet there was enough of the poet lingering in him to make him vaguely feel some memories of youth and some tenderness of pity arise as he looked on the bright head that he had painted with its diadem of flowers, on the opening life that he had found in this beech-wood nest. Had chance not thrown her on him, he would never have sought her; brought to his protection, to his compassion, she won her way to him as some forest-fawn whom he should have found wounded and beaten in the storm might have come to his hand in after-days, and been caressed for the sake of its past peril and its present gratitude.

He had sought the seclusion of the old Latin villa for the isolation which he, a writer and a thinker of whom the world spoke, often preferred to the life of cities, under grey Alpine shadows, in still Danubian woods, by olive-crested Southern seas, or amidst the Moorish ruins of a Granadine landscape. Wealth he had none; but as each young year awoke in its renaissance, he liked to have around him the richness of colour and fragrance, the beauty of the earth's dower, that needed no purchase, but could be made his own by each who loved it well enough to understand its meaning.

In the monastic twilight and silence of the old classic hall, the painting with the crown of flowers glowed brightly and vividly like a living thing from out the gloom; and with the deep studies and the solitary thoughts which had heretofore usurped him, the memory and the presence of this fair child mingled,—not without a charm, a charm which had in it something of recollection. The remembrance was fugitive, and he could never bring it clearly before his knowledge; but it was there, and strong enough to make him seek more of her history. The search was futile: there was no more to know; her mother had died, mute and nameless, and whence she came there was no record—there was not even a suggestion—to show or to hint. One thing alone was certain; her mother had worn no marriage-ring, and the only word marked on the child's linen was the single one Castalia.

The woman had been of great beauty, the peasants said, though worn and haggard, with eyes that burned like flame, and a terrible wandering look; but she had been utterly exhausted when she had reached Fontane, and had lain almost speechless, until in the middle of the hot, heavy, tempestuous night she had looked with a glance that all could read from the face of the priest to the sleeping form of the child, and then had sighed wearily and restlessly, and died.

The blank in the history made it but the more mournful, the more suggestive. An exceeding pity moved in him, as he heard, for the life ushered in in such abandoned desolation, and for which there seemed no haven open save the cloister,—a fate as barbarous for her radiant and impassioned loveliness, which not even the melancholy of her fate could dim, as to wring the glad throat of a song-bird in the full rush of its forest melody. With him at least she was happy,—she who had never known what happiness was,

except such forms of it as the sweet, irrepressible intoxication of the mere sense of existence which youth gives, and the joys that a vivid imagination and a passionate, poetic temperament confer. In his presence she was happy, and he could not refuse it to her Few days passed without his seeing her, in the beech-grove where he had first glanced at her by the broken fountain, in the pine-woods sloping up toward Vallombrosa, in the deserted gardens or in the ruined hall of his own Latin villa. He had no thought in it save that of compassion, even whilst her lustrous eyes vaguely recalled him his past; and in the untutored thoughts that had fed in these hill-solitudes on the legacies of the Hellenic schools and the literature of the Renaissance, he found the wakening intellect of a Corinna. Love had long been killed in him; it was a thing of his youth, never, he believed, like that youth, to revive, and no touch of passion mingled with the pity she aroused in him; but that pity was infinitely gentle, and to her the most precious mercy that her life had known.

In her home, silence and austerity reigned with the stern simplicity of the primitive Church. From the peasants she met with at best a good-natured insolence that was to her instinctively imperial nature worse than all neglect; from him alone she met with what ennobled her in her own sight, and filled her towards him with a passionate gratitude and veneration that was only not love because no knowledge of love had dawned on her, and because an absolute submission and awe were mingled with it. To her he was the incarnation of all sublime lives that she had dreamed of over the histories of Plutarch, and Tacitus, and Claudian, of Augustin, and Hildebrand, and Basil; to her he was as an emperor to his lieges, as an archangel to his devotees; all grand and gracious things to her seemed blended in him, and all lofty and royal lives of poet, saint, or king with which her memory was stored seemed to her met in his. It was not love that she bore him; it was something infinitely more unconscious and more idealized: it was an absolute adoration.

She did not know why the hours were a dead worthless space unless they brought her to his presence, why the mere distant sound of his voice filled her heart with a joy intense as pain, why any suffering he had bidden her would have been sweeter than any gladness, why the forest-world about her wore a light it had never had before:—she did not know; she only knew that all the earth seemed changed and transfigured. He was not blind to it; it touched him, it beguiled him, it pleased him; it was very long since any thing had loved him and been the happier for his smile; it was very long since these softer, slighter things had come into his life, and they had a certain charm for him.

There had been a time when all women's eyes had gained a brighter light at his approach, though that time lay far away in a deserted land; yet in some faint measure it revived for him, as he saw the silent welcome, more eloquent than all words, of this young Tuscan's glance; and to him she was but a beautiful child, to be caressed, without deeper thought.

" **Eccellenza** !" she said, hesitatingly, one day that he had paused

by her beside her favourite haunt by the Roman fountain in the black belt of the beech-woods, "you tell me that I have talent; you say that my voice, when I sing the Latin chants that you love best, is music the world would love too. Would they do nothing for me *in* the world?"

That "world" was so vague, so far off, so dim, so glorious to her! She could not have told what she thought lay beyond those chestnut-belts that she had never passed; but her ideal of the unknown land was divine as Dante's of the City of God.

He answered her slowly: he knew the fate to which her defenceless and nameless beauty would there be doomed; but he could not find the heart to break her fair illusion.

"They might—they would; but you are better and safer here in your mountain shelter."

A quick sigh escaped her.

"Oh, no!"

"No? How can you tell that? You do not know what would await you. Be happy while you may, Castalia; the world would crush you!"

She looked at him wistfully, while a grander power and aspiration than the mere longing of a child for "fresh fields and pastures new" gleamed in eyes that in a little while would burn with passion as they now glanced with light.

"It is only the weak who are crushed. They could not scorn me for my birth and loneliness if I forced them to say, 'See! fate was harsh to her; but God gave her genius and enduranee, and she conquered!'"

The words and the tone moved him deeply: the fearless youth, with its faith, its fervour, its courage, its sublime blindness of belief, recalled to him his own.

"Ah, Castalia!" he answered gently, "but the world loves best to dwarf God and to deny genius. And genius in a woman! Cyril's envy stones Hypatia, and casts her beauty to the howling crowds."

Her head drooped, but the look of resolve, though shadowed, did not pass off her face.

"Perhaps! Yet better Hypatia's glory won with her death, than a long, obscure, ignoble, useless life! You say, be happy here, 'lustrissimo: happy! when all my future is the convent?"

It was a great terror to her, that monastic doom to which the priest inexorably condemned her future;—other provision he could make none for her. She was so full of vivid, luxuriant, abundant, glowing life. Life was to her an unread poem of such magical enchantment, an ungathered flower of such sorceress-charm;—and nothing opened to her except that living tomb!

He gave an involuntary gesture of pain.

"God forbid! Some fairer fate will come to you than that. To condemn *you* to a convent-cell! it would be as brutal as the captivity of Héloïse."

A brooding weariness passed over the beauty of her face.

"But Héloïse was happier than I should be. She had been loved once!"

There was no thought in her as she spoke, save the longing for tenderness ever denied her, and an instinctive comprehension of the passion and the sacrifice of Paraclète.

Where he leaned against a beech-stem above her, his hand touched her hair lingeringly and tenderly, as it had done when he had brought her through the storm,—like a touch to a fluttering bird.

"You would love like Héloïse?"

She drew a deep, soft breath; she was always awed with the despair and the beauty, half mystic, wholly sublimated to her, of that eternal tale.

"Ah, who would not? That alone is love! 'Quand l'empereur eût voulu m'honorer du nom de son épouse, j'aurais mieux aimer être appelée ta maîtresse!'"

The words of Héloïse on her innocent lips, which uttered them with no thought save of their devotion and their fidelity,—their choice of slavery to her lover rather than of imperial pomp with any other,—had an eloquence and a temptation greater than she knew.

He sighed almost unconsciously; it was the love of which he had dreamt in his youth,—dreamt, and never found.

"Castalia! you make me wish we had met earlier!"

"Earlier! Why?"

"No matter! What is it you are reading there?"

She lifted him the book; an Italian translation of an English romance,—"Lucrèce."

A shadow, weary and heavy, came on his face as he glanced through the pages.

"You know it?" she asked him.

"Yes, I know it."

"I love it so well! It was left here by chance years ago, by some travellers going through to Vallombrosa. It is beautiful! It moves me as the winds do when they make their music through the woods, and seem as though they called on men to cease from evil and remember God."

The words, fantastic, yet very eloquent, while her eyes grew humid, and the colour on her cheek grew warm as the scarlet heart of a pomegranate, were perhaps the truest homage the work had ever known.

He closed the book and gave it back.

"Since you feel it so, you give the author his best reward."

"But you must think it great, too?"

"No; it is very imperfect. No one knew that better than he who wrote it."

"It is perfect to *me*. And who was he,—its writer?"

"You see his name there."

"Yes, his name; but his fate——"

"Was, they say, a very common one. It was the fate of Icarus, who thought himself a winged god, and fell broken to earth."

"He never fell ignobly," she said, below her breath. "He strove to rise too high, perhaps; and those who were earth-bound

envied him, and shot him down as hunters shoot an eagle; but whoever wrote that book would only gather strength from any fall."

He answered her nothing.

The spring deepened into early summer; he had been seven weeks in the Latin villa since the day he had found her in the storm, and he saw her often. He was beguiled with her, and the thoughts of her cultured fancy, all untinged by the world's taint as they were, had a certain charm for the scholar, not less than her personal loveliness had a charm for one who had been, as the world held, a libertine. But either passion was dead in him, or her defencelessness lent her sanctity in his sight; for no warmer word or glance than that of a pitying and pure tenderness ever came from him to teach her either his power or hers.

She knew nothing of his history, not even his name; to the peasantry he was simply "the stranger." He was sojourning here for the *villegiatura*, and into his solitude none had ventured until she had been taken there by the hazards of the mountain weather. Muse on what could be his history she often did, but to question him on it she would no more have thought of than, in the old legends of her Church, those whom angels visited thought of pressing curiously upon their reverenced guest. She followed other words of Héloïse, "En toi je ne cherchai que toi, rien de toi que toi-même." It was he who was the idol of her thoughts; what he was, whence he came, she never sought to know. The kingship of the earth would not have seemed to her an empire too superb for him to have forsaken. She would have believed whatever he should have told her of himself—save evil. As it was, he told her nothing; and he spoke her language and the dead Latin, which was equally familiar to her, so that he might have been a Tuscan by birth, or, as her fancy—imaginative to extravagance—sometimes could have almost conceived, have lived in those ages of Augustan Rome or Gracchan Revolution of which he loved best to converse.

Utterly at his mercy she was; of peril to her from him she had no conception,—what he had commanded she would have obeyed implicitly; of her own danger she was profoundly ignorant; and that he could have erred she would have no more believed than the simple fanatics of her native beech-woods would have believed in the error of the saints and seraphs to whom they prayed. The very difference in their years, wide as it was, lent an additional charm to their intercourse, and even an additional danger, since it lent it also an apparent and fallacious security.

Later on that same day, returning through the forest above Fontane to the ruined villa, where he lived in the ascetic simplicity of a man whose only riches lie in his own intellect and in the books that he can gather round him, he saw her again, as the sudden break in the wall of leaves and the sudden descent of the rocky pathway brought him to a grey antique broken bridge that spanned what was now little save a dry water-course, orchid-filled, with a narrow, glimmering, brown brook under the flowers. She was

leaning over the parapet, resting her arm on a basket of fruit. There was the indolent, reposeful grace of her southern blood in the attitude, but there was also something of depression; and while a joyous light flashed into her eyes, he saw that they had been dim with tears. He paused beside her.

"Castalia! what has vexed you?"

"An idle thing, eccellenza."

"Nothing is idle if it have power to wound you. Tell me."

A proud pain, that was half of it scorn for itself and half the impatience to repay scorn, was on her face as she raised it.

"It is my folly to *be* wounded! But as two contadine passed me a while ago, they thrust out their lips with a smile that was wicked, and looked at me. 'Like mother, like child!' And I knew that they meant disdain at me and at her; and my heart ached because I could not *revenge*. Revenge is guilt, the Padre Giulio says; it may be, but when they mock at her, it would be very sweet to me."

The strength of vengeance gleamed for a moment over the softness of her youth; he saw how easily the noble nature here might be driven to desperation and to guilt. If the lash of scorn fell on her, it would never chasten, but it would goad and madden into rebellion, perhaps into recklessness.

"*Poverina!*" he said, caressingly, "evil be to those who cause you one moment's pain. Does so much coarseness and cruelty exist even in your primitive valley? But do not heed them, Castalia; these women are beneath your regret; and, remember, calumny can only lower us when it has power to make us what it calls us."

Her glance gave him eloquent and grateful comprehension.

"Oh, 'lustrissimo! it is not *their* scorn that I heed; it is only—I am afraid that it may bring me yours. And death would be more merciful to me!"

The words touched him deeply,—more deeply than he showed; for he sought to turn her thoughts from herself, as he took her hands in his own, and looked down into the splendour of her eyes.

"Castalia, never fear that. I honour you for what you are, my child. Your mother's error—if error it were—can never rest upon you; and the world is often sorely at fault in its judgments. It condones its thieves, and condemns its martyrs. But you are rash to attach so much value to my opinion. You do not know who I am,—whence I come,—what my history may be."

"But I know *you*. Had I sought to know more, would you not have thought me unworthy of so much? The fable of Psyche is so true; where doubt has once come, faith is dishonoured."

He smiled at the fable she chose, and her insight into human nature.

"Right. I think Eros was justified in taking wing and in never returning; but still there is such a thing as prudence. How can you tell that some guilt does not rest on me?—that I come here because I am a marked and disgraced man?—that I may be utterly unlike all you believe me?"

She looked at him proudly and yet sadly.

"Eccellenza, those who bear guilt do not look as you look; and, whatever you be, you are *great.*"

"No! I told you I am a fallen Cæsar, and dropped my purples long ago."

"But his purples are the least part of Cæsar's greatness."

"Not in the world's estimate. Come, let me see you homeward."

He raised the load of yellow gourds and luscious summer fruits, glowing amidst leaves and wild flowers, as he spoke; she tried to take it from him.

"Oh, illustrissimo! do not do that! *You* must not carry a burden."

"I have carried many," he said, half with a smile. She looked at him still, with that reverent, wistful look; she wondered what he had been.

"You have? But they must have been the weight of royalties, then. Give me the fruit! Pray do not take it for me!"

"Castalia, an emperor is bound to serve a woman. We have that lingering chivalry among us, at least."

The rocky road wound down under beech-boughs, and over green turf, and into the twilight of dense woods, till the aerial campanile of Fontane rose in its delicate height like a frozen fountain out of the nest of leaves. The Tuscan sunset, in all its glow, was just on earth and sky as they entered the valley where the white spire and the masses of chestnut-wood stood out against the intense blue of the early summer heavens.

"Coleridge cried, 'O God, how glorious it is to live!'" he said, rather to himself than to her, as they came into the roseate radiance. "Renan asks, 'O God, when will it be worth while to live?' In nature we echo the poet; in the world we echo the thinker."

The light was gone, the twilight fallen, as he left her at the little châlet where the charity of the Church sheltered her. He drew her to him with an involuntary action of tenderness.

"Castalia, good-night!"

Her eyes looked up to his in the shadows heavily flung around them by the bending boughs. The infinite beauty of her face had never been more fair; almost unconsciously, something of the softness of dead years revived in him; he stooped his head, and his lips touched the flushed warmth of her cheek in farewell. The kiss startled her childhood from its rest for ever; with it the knowledge of love came to her.

A sudden consciousness, a sudden alarm, quivered through her; her heart beat like a caught bird, in a sweetness and joy that made her afraid at their terrible strength and made her tremble before him as though criminal with some great guilt; she stood like an antelope that in its wild, shy grace only tempts the hunter the more: what she felt had a strange awe for her, and as strange a rapture. Though given only in a compassionate tenderness, the caress had taught the meaning of passion; her colour burned, her eyes sank under his.

At that instant the tread of a heavy step was heard on the silence: she fled instinctively, fleet as a fawn, into the deepening shadow of the arched and open door; he turned away and went back up the woodland road to his own dwelling. Fronting him, in a faint ray of dying light that slanted through the wall of chestnut and of cypress, the old priest stood, his grave, austere features rugged as the riven rock.

"Give me a word with you," he said, simply.

He whom he checked in his path looked up and paused; he had scarcely seen, and as scarcely thought of, the self-appointed guardian of Castalia.

"A word with me? Assuredly."

The priest looked at him with searching eyes, in which there was still a great sadness and a great appeal.

"Whoever you be," he said, briefly, "whether great, as I deem by your bearing, or no, I speak to you not as to one owning authority, nor as one holding myself God's command, but simply as man speaks to man."

"Say on."

"Then I say, have you thought what it is you do now?"

"Do? I fail to understand you."

"I will make my meaning plainer, then. Do you mean to ruin that young life?"

"God forbid!"

"Then do you know that they speak evil of her on your score? Do you know that, through you, they say the shame of her mother is hers?"

"They lie, then—utterly! Teach your flock more charity to youth and innocence, holy father. And let me pass; I cannot wait for this catechism."

"I thank you for that denial; *I* did not need it; her eyes are too clear beneath mine. Yet allow me a few words more. You give her no love, probably; but you are already far more her religion than the creed I have taught her from infancy. How will you use your power over her?"

He was silent; his thoughts were little with the speaker; he was thinking of the lips that had trembled beneath his own.

"You may lead her where you will; I confess it you! You, a stranger, who saw her first but a few weeks ago, have a force to mould and sway her that I never won—I who have reared her and succoured her well-nigh from her birth," said the Italian, with a bitterness in which was a yearning pain. "It may be that I have seemed harsh to her; it may be that I have missed my way—that, while I strove overmuch to shield her from her mother's error, I forgot to woo her trust and her heart—I forgot that a child, and a woman-child above all, needs love and needs indulgence. It may be that I erred. Be it so or not, you can command her; and I can no more stay her from your sorcery than I can check the winds. Yet you say you would not blight her life; you speak as though you had pity on her. You say you leave her innocence sacred; but will you, then, rob her of peace? You say you will not lead

her to dishonour: will you not spare her also the bitterness of a knowledge that must destroy the virginity of the heart? You say the slanderers lie: will you not, then, be wholly merciful, and leave her ere she learns to love you too well? You can make her the plaything of an hour; but it will only be at the price of her whole future."

He stood silent still while the old priest spoke. He had not thought of cost to her.

"Your lips touched hers to-night," pursued the Tuscan. "The woman who has once felt shame under a caress has already lost half her purity. You gave her in that a memory which will burn into her heart with humiliation every time that she thinks of you. You may mean her no injury now; but you are one who has lived long, doubtless, in the pleasures of the world: how will it end if you remain near her?"

He raised his eyes, where they stood in the early evening light falling so faintly through the parting in the barrier of cypress, and looked full at the Italian.

"You plead with *me* for her; to what fate do you condemn her yourself? The cloister? Have you ever thought what it is to bury her in that tomb which cannot claim even the repose of the graves of the dead?—to bar her out from light and laughter and melody and joy?—to chain her loveliness where no kiss shall ever meet her own, no heart beat on hers, no eyes see her smile, no lover seek her embrace? Have you ever thought what you will do when you seal down such luxuriant life as hers to beat, and struggle, and desire, and pine, and wither, and perish alone? Yours is the cruelty—not mine!"

The Tuscan's furrowed cheek grew paler; he was too deep a scholar to be a fanatical churchman, and in his close, stern, rugged soul he cherished Castalia tenderly.

"I mean no cruelty,—Christ knows. But I have no other shelter for her, and there at least she would have innocence."

"Innocence forced and untempted! what is it better than sin? Let her take her chance in the width of the world, let her even know trial and poverty and temptation, let her be a wanderer and a beggar, if she must; but leave her the free air, and the forest liberty, and the human love that is her right, and the possibility at least of joy!"

The Italian sighed wearily.

"I strive for the best; and my cruelty is not as yours. I would save her at least from actual pain; you—if you do her no worse thing—will bind on her a passion and a regret that will consume her to her grave. I know her nature; and though she has the innocence, she has not the inconstancy, of a child: she will not *forget*. There is but one way to spare her: leave her."

He was silent a while longer, as the priest's words ceased, and there was no sound save the falling of a water-course rushing downward through the gloom and through the leaves.

"I will leave her," he said, at last, "if you in turn give me your word never to force her life into a convent."

"I promise."

"So be it. I will make her no farewell; let her think me heartless of her, if she will; so she will best forget."

Then he went upward alone through the evening shadows, along the slope of the hills, to the loneliness of the Latin villa. In the gloom of the deserted hall the picture of the diadem of flowers alone gleamed radiant as a ray of the moonlight fell across it. He paused before the painting, and a sudden pity stole on him.

The promise that he had given had a certain pain for him. It was not love that he felt for her. There had been too great a darkness on his life for the softness of that passion easily to revive; but he had found a pleasure in once more, after lengthened solitude, being the subject of that sweet, reverent adoration; and she had inspired him with an unspeakable compassion for her fate, which could not let him muse without anxiety upon that fate's inevitable future. There had been a time when the lavishness of his gifts and the influence of his word could have lifted her into happiness as easily as a flower is transplanted into sunlight from the shade; but that time was far away. He felt the hardest pang of poverty to those of generous nature: he had *nothing to give.*

He had offered the promise, and he would redeem it because she was motherless and defenceless, and therefore sacred to him; but he stood and looked at the flower-crowned painting with a pang of regret.

"It is a harsh mercy that he asks of me," he thought; "and yet what else should be the end? Love is no toy for me now; and she is worthier of a happier fate than to be the passing fancy, the consolation of an hour, to a worn and wearied life."

On the morrow, ere the sun was high, he was far from Vallombrosa.

BOOK THE SEVENTH.

CHAPTER I.

"DO WELL UNTO THYSELF, AND MEN WILL SPEAK GOOD OF THEE."

THE Member for Darshampton sat at breakfast in his house in town,—a fine mansion, whose rental was two thousand a year, yet in whose unostentatious and solid comfort there was the impress of sterling wealth, but not a trace of parvenu arrogance or ill taste.

He sat at breakfast in his dining-room; a long, low room, hung with crimson and with a few fine pictures; at the farther end was a white bust on a pillar of jaspar: it was the bust of a long-dead statesman, Philip Chandos. The Member for Darshampton was taking his breakfast, surrounded with a sea of morning papers; he

had already done two hours' hard work with his secretary, dictating, annotating, reading reports, computing statistics, conning over *précis*. Leisure, indeed, was a thing he never knew; untiring, elastic, indefatigable, unsparing, he was an admirable man of business, and every moment of his day was consumed in a labour seemingly borne as lightly as it was in reality thoroughly done, whatever its nature.

Public life was his natural sphere; to it he brought a brain ever vigilant, an energy ever unconquerable, a facility that might have been almost too facile had it not been corrected by a keen and vigorous patience that would never slur over anything, and that searched out the minutest points of every subject. Yet the enormous variety, and the intensity of application that characterised his work, told in no sort of way on his health: he felt well, looked well, slept well; he never found any tax on his strength touch him, more than if he had been made of oak or granite; he never knew what pain or what weariness was. He reaped now the recompense of the training, the temperance, and the entire freedom from all license in vice that he had imposed on himself so severely throughout his early manhood. His eyes were as bright, his skin as clear, his teeth as white, his smile as merry, as twenty years before; John Trevenna was unchanged,—unchanged in form and feature, in manner and in mind. In the first, the man was too healthily framed to alter much with time; in the latter, he was too integrally original, and bore too thorough and marked an idiosyncrasy to alter while he had life. He cut his impress on the world about him, he did not take his mould from it: men of this type change little. Moreover, Trevenna had Success: it is a finer tonic than any the Pharmacopœia holds, specially for those who, like him, are too wise to let it be also a stimulant that intoxicates or an opiate that drugs them.

He had success of the richest and the fullest. Slowly won, but surely, he had mounted his cautious and victorious way to those heights that long ago had been a goal of which men would have called him a madman ever to dream, and had netted together the innumerable threads of his policies and his efforts, till he had woven them into a rope-ladder strong enough and long enough to reach the power he had coveted from earliest boyhood. His rise had, in appearance, been gradual, yet it had been rapid in fruits and in attainment; and there were few men living of whom so much was thought in the present, from whom so much was expected in the future. The sedulous training he had pursued so patiently had brought its own reward: none went to the political arena more finely prepared for it: none had more completely gained a footing and a power there.

The first words he had uttered in the House had told them his quality, had told them that no ordinary man had come among them to represent that little borough of the south-western seaboard; but he had been careful, and he had been wise. He had not alarmed them with a sudden burst of talent; he had been content to run a waiting race for the first, and to bide his time. He

had let his influence *grow;* he had been noted earliest rather for his admirable common sense and his practical working powers, than for anything more brilliant; and gradually as his critical audience, who regarded him as an outsider and an adventurer, became cognizant of his value, he allowed the true resources and the real capabilities of his mind to be discovered. *Festina lente* was his motto, and he had followed it with a patience the more marvellous in one whose quick, energetic, prompt, caustic temper always urged him to instant action and ironic retort.

Now he had his reward; his weight was immense, his popularity with the large and wealthy and liberal mass of the country, extreme. Ministers dreaded him, chiefs of his own party recognised in him the first of all their auxiliaries; Government would have bought his silence with any place; the benches never were so crowded as on a night when one of his watched-for and trenchant speeches rang through the drowsy air of the Lower Chamber like the clear stirring notes of a trumpet. He was rich; his commercial speculations, made with that unerring acumen which distinguished him, had prospered and multiplied a thousandfold; all he undertook succeeded. Those who had sneered him down had become compelled to court and conciliate him; great orders who had dubbed him nobody, and shut him with scorn outside their pale, now learned to dread him as their direst opponent. Houses where he had used to enter on sufferance now received him as an honoured guest; statesmen who had once blackballed him at clubs now would have given any splendid bribe he would have taken to still his defiance or to secure his alliance. Against prestige, prejudice, poverty, the sneer of the world, the antagonism of the nobility, the uttermost disadvantages and difficulties of position, Trevonna had fought his way into a foremost rank, and compelled his foes to acknowledge and to dread the man whom they had laughed down as an insignificant *farceur*, a nameless club-lounger.

His conquest was grand; the indomitable courage that he had brought to it, the exhaustless endurance with which he had sustained defeat and humiliation, the untiring resolve with which h had kept one aim in view so long, and beaten down the barriers of class and custom, are the most magnificent qualities of human life The work was great, and greatly done. The man who vanquishes the opprobrium of adverse orders and the opposition of adverse circumstances, is a soldier as staunch as the Barca brood of Carthage; but—the weapons with which the fight had been fought here were foul as an assassin's, and the root, like the goal of the struggle, was envy. A man may rise with an admirable perseverance and dauntlessness; but the hatchets with which he carves his way up the steep shelving ice-slope may nevertheless be blood-stained steel and stolen goods. We are too apt, in our wonder and our applause at the height to which he has attained against all odds, to forget to note whether his steps up the incline have been clean and justly taken.

Trevenna's frankness, his *bonhomie*, his logical brain, his racy eloquence, his practical working powers, his taking candour, with

which he avowed himself of the middle classes, claiming no rights of birth, his cheerful and unerring good sense, with which he would alike treat a political question by examining its business utility, and disarm a social sneer by disclaiming all pretensions to rank or to dignity, charmed the world in general, paralyzed his aristocratic foes, and pioneered his way wherever he would, giving him a wide and sure hold on the classes to whose sympathies he made his direct appeal. The fine intrigues by which power had been secretly won to him; the merciless knowledge with which he coerced those whose histories he held in a tyranny none the less irresistible because tacit; the paths in which his finesses had wandered to gather his hold on so many; the sinks out of which his wealth had been taken, as gold is found in the sewers; the manifold infamies into which his bright skill had dived, to issue from them with a terrible omnipotence; the network of inimitable chicaneries, ever wisely to windward of the law, with which he had overspread the world he had vanquished; the commercial gambling in which he had filled his treasuries by a fluke, and doubled and quadrupled gains gotten by lies; the hearty, ironic, good-humoured, rascally contempt in which he held all mankind, and disbelieved in all honesty,—these were unknown, unguessed, alike by the people who believed in him, by the aristocracies who hated him, by the party who adored him, and by the world on which he had, against odds so vast, graven the impress of his daring and splendid talent.

When the white block of marble shines so solid and so costly, who remembers that it was once made up of decaying shells and rotting bones and millions of dying insect-lives, pressed to ashes ere the rare stone was?

Trevenna's success was, like the bricks of the ancient temples, cemented with the blood of quivering hearts; but it was all the firmer for that, and none the less victorious. Now, where he sat in his dining-room, he glanced down the leaders of his own especial organ, a journal that ever sounded "Io triumphe" before him,—glanced amusedly over the closing words of the column devoted to the praise of "the most promising statesman we possess,—the assured chief of the future,—the great orator by whom Darshampton is so nobly represented."

"Of unflagging energy," pursued his *claqueur* of the *Communist*, "of the highest political probity, of a fixity of principle never to be turned from its goal by the gilded bait of office, of talents most versatile, yet which never interfere with his devotion to the smallest business detail or mercantile interest, essentially English in creed, bias, and temper, preferring solid excellence to the flashy fascination of superficial attainment, and signalized by cordial and earnest sympathies with the wishes and the rights of the masses, it is to Mr. Trevenna that all thoughtful and advanced minds must inevitably look for progress and assistance in the future of our nation. The laws, the liberties, the domestic virtues of the hearth and home, the independence abroad, and the prosperity of internal interests, the maintenance of religion and morality, the security of the birthright of freedom to the poorest life that breathes,—all that

are so notably dear to every Englishman are equally precious to him; and their preservation from all foreign taint and alien tyranny is the object alike of his public and private career. Conquest does not recommend itself to him as peace and charity do; and the clash of arms is jarring on his ear when heard instead of the whirr of a myriad looms, bread-winning and bread-giving. The welfare of the vast industrial classes of Great Britain is at his heart before all else; and to the sway which he exerts over the Senate, even when its members be most strongly adverse to him, we may apply the trite lines of the 'Æneid,' 'Hoc tibi erunt artes,' &c. &c."

So the *Communist*. Trevenna laughed: the lion had too much racy humour in him not to enjoy the ridicule of his jackal's fine peroration.

"Very well, my good fellow," he thought, condescendingly. "Laid on a trifle too thick, perhaps; and you *will* call the Commons a 'Senate,' and nothing will cure you of trotting out your bit of school Latin, whether it quite fits or not: still, it does very well. 'Virtues of the hearth and home;' ah! nothing brings down the House like that. We're as blackguard a nation as any going in vice; but we do love to amble out with a period about domestic bosh. My puffs were neater when I wrote 'em myself; no gale blows you so bravely along as the breeze you prick yourself out of the wind-bag. Who should know so well as yourself all your most telling hits, your titbits of excellence, your charming niceties of virtue? The puff perfect is the puff personal—adroitly masked. Mercy on us! I do believe Hudibras is right, and the cheated enjoy being cheated. If I told my dearly beloved masses, now, 'You're a lot of uneducated donkeys,—but you're my best stepping-stones, and so I make you lie down and I get into your saddles,' they'd be disgusted to-morrow. I talk liberties, moderated Socialism, philanthropy, and moralities; I wear the Bonnet Rouge discreetly weighted down with a fine tassel of British prudence, and they believe in me! Can't, either, quite, surely? And yet I don't know; there isn't anything so easily taken in as a whole country. Nine-tenths of a nation are such fools,—that's where it is; of course the other tenth part do what they like with them."

With which reflection on the aggregate of whom he was an honored representative, Trevenna ate a *rognon au vin de Madère*. His delight in the infinite jest of the world was unchanged; he enjoyed with an unction never sated the whole of the vast burlesque to which he played the triumphant part of Arlecchino: his heart was as light as a boy's, and his humour as savory as Falstaff's. Having worn the robes of respectability of a grave and reverend signior, all day long before the people, he would come home and toss them off with as mischievous a glee at the perfection with which he had played his part, as in earlier days he had tossed aside his domino and mask after teasing the life out of everybody at a masquerade.

He ate his kidney, glancing over some other journals that echoed the *Communist* with a more or less different wording, and some Op-

position ones that flattered him equally well by damning him so very strongly that nothing but an acute dread of him could make them so bitter. Of the two, perhaps these pleased him the best. Intense abuse may be, on the whole, a surer testimony to your power than intense praise; and, moreover, he was of that nature which is never so vigorously happy as when it has something to combat. He was made of splendidly tough stuff, this man who had been so long looked down upon as a mere town-chatterbox and diner-out; and he throve on every added effort which endeavoured to displace him, and only grew the more firmly rooted for it. Breakfast done, and a first-rate cigar or two smoked, he rose, nodded to the white bust at the end of the chamber with mischief in his eyes, as though it were a living thing (he liked to see that bit of statuary there, as soldiers like to see their enemy's standards droop on their mess-room walls, in witness of hard-fought and successful war), and went out to his busy day. He toiled none the less than he had done when self-educating himself for the tribuneship he now filled; he was not a whit less punctual, arduous, and methodical than he had been when he had ground logic and finance and laws of exchange, while the world thought him an idle *flâneur;* every thing he undertook was done with a conscientious thoroughness, none the less complete because its far-sighted motive was ultimate aggrandizement. Let him have risen as high as he would, he would never have spared himself: he loved work for its own pleasure, as a man loves swimming.

His party was out of office at this time,—had been so for some two or three years; whenever they should come in again, he knew they could not help but offer him a seat in the Cabinet; well as many of them detested him, they dared not risk his enmity or his opposition. To get them into office once more, therefore, and write himself the Right Hon. John Trevenna, he laboured assiduously, and for the opposite faction with a terrible ability. He had so weakened, undermined, countermined, impugned, ridiculed, arraigned, and stripped bare their policies, that it was generally believed they would be compelled before long to try an appeal to the country. They had no one strong enough in debate, though they had several brilliant speakers, to oppose the sledge-hammer force of his close arguments and the weight of his keen logic, that felled their defences with its sharp pole-axe.

He accorded now two hours after breakfast to correspondence and such matters; then he gave audience to a Darshampton deputation, who came in sturdily sullen, but were received with such chatty familiarity, such pleasant good nature, that they went out again docile and enchanted, and never had time to remember till they were half-way home that they had extracted no pledge from him and received not one single definite answer; then he saw some score or more of different visitors, breathless with political anxiety or brimming with political rumours; a private interview with a foreign ambassador, and a confidential *tête-à-tête* with a great lord of his party, followed; then he sauntered into one or two of the Pall-Mall clubs, as full of news, wit, and good humour as when he had made his

repartees to get his dinners; then he drove down to show at a couple of garden-parties at a French prince's and a Scotch duchess's, vivacious, full of fun, charming the ladies as "so droll, so original!" and playing lawn-billiards as if he had not another stake in the world; then he went to the House for a couple of hours and launched a short speech that told like a rifle-shot; then he went to a dinner-party at a great chief's of his party; and thence to an Embassy-ball.

There were wars and rumours of war political pending; there was agitation in the great aristocratic ranks of opposition; there were excitement and intrigue in the whole of the world of state-craft. It was a crisis, as the *grandes dames* murmured with emphasis, and he liked to show these nobles, these hereditary statesmen, these women who had once scarcely bowed to him as a "rank outsider," that he could take the emergency with all the sang-froid imaginable, gossip as pleasantly as though no import hung on the night, and chatter with a duchess about Tuileries tittle-tattle till he was called away and carried forcibly off by a whip who was in the height of haste and trepidation.

"He will cut some work out for you," had the old duke once said of him; and Trevenna made good his words. His party hated alliance with him, but they no more dared alienate him than they dared have called him in Darshampton what they called him in secret,—a demagogue. Of a truth he was no demagogue; he was far too wise and far too cultured. He was simply a sagacious, audacious, astute, and unerring politician, willing to lead the people as far as it was his interest to do so, but not one step farther, if they starved by the thousand.

Many lords had come down to hear the Debate; the Ladies' and Strangers' Galleries were full, the crowds outside the House packed close in expectation; it was known that the fate of parties hinged chiefly on this night's issue. With a grey paletot over his evening dress, he sauntered to his place, imperturbable, nonchalant, looking as bright and as keen as though he were just going up to the wickets at cricket. All eyes were on him; he was used to that by this time, and liked nothing better. He loved to know that his brisk, elastic step, and his good-humoured, easy bearing, were as well known here as the haughty grace of Philip Chandos once had been. The ambition of his life centred in the turn of the night; the hopes of his party centred in himself. It was his to attack, and, if possible, to defeat, the Government, and all the resources of his intellect had been brought to meet the need; yet, as he took his seat, he was as genial, as bright, as light-hearted, as though he were a school-boy, and was so without a shade of affectation in it. He had the qualities of a very great man in him, and he loved the atmosphere of conflict.

His famous rival's speech closed: it had been brilliant, persuasive, subtle, launching an unpopular measure with consummate skill, and fascinating, if it failed to convince, all auditors. It was no facile task to reply to and refute him. Trevenna rose, one hand lightly laid on the rail, the other in the breast of his coat; on his

lips was his pleasant, frank smile: the Opposition had learned to dread its meaning. The House was profoundly hushed as his voice, perfectly moderated, but resonant, telling and clarion-like, pierced the silence. He knew well how to hold its ear.

He was a master of the great art of banter. It is a marvellous force: it kills sanctity, unveils sophistry, travesties wisdom, cuts through the finest shield, and turns the noblest impulses to hopeless ridicule. He was a master of it; with it he rent his antagonist's arguments like gauze, stripped his metaphors naked, pilloried his logic and his rhetoric, his finance and his economics, and left the residue of his ornate eloquence a skeleton and a laughing-stock. He did this matchlessly, and did not do it too much: he knew the temper of his audience, and never transgressed its laws of courtesy. He carried it with him as by magic, and from his lighter weapons he passed on, and took up the terseness of reasoning, the closeness of logic, the mathematical exactitude, the shrewd, practical common sense, without which no speaker will ever thoroughly gain the confidence and homage of the English Commons. It might not be the silver eloquence of a Demosthenes, but it was the oratory suited above all to his theme and to his place,—classic, moreover, even whilst it was business-like and restrained, as befitting a gathering of gentlemen, even whilst most audacious, most pungent, most merciless in raillery and attack.

The House cheered him in riotous excitement as he sat down, and the supreme triumph of a triumphant life was given him. His speech did a rare thing in St. Stephen's: it influenced the votes: the Government was defeated hopelessly on a great issue, and could have no choice but to resign.

There was the grandeur, if there were the insolence, of supreme success, self-won, in Trevenna's eyes and in his thoughts, as he went out in the lateness of the night with the cheers which had ratified his victory still seeming to echo in his ear. He looked, as his carriage rolled through the gaslights, down the darkling streets of Westminster, and thought of the night he had stood there as a boy and trodden out the luscious Paris bonbons of a young child's gift. What he had done since then!

"Beaux seigneurs! what of the outsider *now?*" he mused, with his victorious smile on his mouth. "In a week's time I shall be called the Right Hon. John Trevenna; and they dread me so bitterly they will dare to refuse me no place in the Cabinet that I choose to command."

"The ministry will go out. Sit down, and don't yawn: there is no end to do," he said, curtly, to his secretary, as he threw off his paletot and entered his library. It was nigh four in the morning; but his indefatigable elasticity and energy knew no fatigue. As though just fresh to the work, he plunged into correspondence that no précis-writing could have made terser and no diplomatist have surpassed for masterly surface-honesty and secret reticence. A splendid campaign had been finished; a splendid campaign was to be commenced. The army of attack had been led triumphant: the army of occupation was to be headed in the

future. There would be others higher than he in the titular dignities of office, but there would be none higher in virtual power.

"Do well unto thyself, and the world will speak well of thee." It was rare indeed that ever now there was found one bold enough to murmur against the wealthy speculator, the popular favourite, the astute politician, the audacious and sagacious winner of all life's choicest prizes, the bitter word that had long ago been cast at him,—"adventurer."

Others forgot that old time; he did not. He loved to remember every jot of it. He loved to remember the vow he had sworn in the midnight streets in his childhood. He loved to remember every privation endured, every smart felt, every insolence taken in silence, every long lonely night spent in hard toil and pitiless study, while the merry world laughed around in its pleasures and vices. He loved to count up how much he had conquered, and to pay back jibes of twenty years ago, treasured up and waiting their vengeance; he loved to make men who had turned their backs on him then bow before him now, and to glance downward on the vast decline up which he had mounted, and to think how the sureness of his foot and the keenness of his eye had brought him against all difficulty to the table-lands where he now stood secure. All he forgot were—benefits.

With these triumphal thoughts did remorse ever mingle? Did he ever remember the cost to other lives at which so much of his victory had been gained? Did he ever give a flush of shame when he recollected how he had rewarded evil for good, and bitten through with tiger-fangs the hand which had loaded him with gifts, and betrayed and robbed and driven down to ruin the most loyal friend that ever gave him fearless faith? Never once! Amidst the pæans of success conscience has small chance to be heard, and the temper of Trevenna was proof against all such weakness. He would have said that he knew neither form of indigestion,—neither dyspepsia nor repentance.

CHAPTER II.

THE THRONE OF THE EXILE.

It was in the boudoir of the great house of Lilliesford, where a political coterie wove its silken meshes for men's souls and official places. Very beautiful women were seen in it sometimes, but they were rarely the gay young sovereigns; they were rather the older and more stately leaders of the world political. For of these latter was the Countess of Clydesmore.

She sat there now, in the darkest depths of the shadow, her head slightly bent, no light on the rich brown wealth of her hair or the sculpture-like perfection of her features. She was a woman whom her own great world revered: no levity ever touched her name, no coquetry ever lowered her dignity. Ambitious she was,

though she scarce knew what for,—rather for the simple sake and sweetness of power and of prerogative than anything else. If her heart remained cold as ice to the man whose name she graced and whose children she had borne,—if her young sons never saw any smile in her eyes, but shrank from her in their infancy, chilled and afraid,—her world did not know this, and, had it known, would have thought it no breach of the social code. We lay blame to society because it judges from the surface:—idle blame: how else can it judge?

She was a stainless wife, of a lofty purity of life; if in her soul she hated with a hate intense as passion the man to whom she had bound captive her beauty,—if when she looked on the children she had brought him she pressed her lips tight to hold back a curse on them because he was their father,—who could tell this? None, —save the husband who had heard another name than his own murmured wearily in the dreams of her bridal sleep,—save the young boys who glanced at her with timid, troubled eyes, and wondered why, when, for duty or for appearance, she had touched their cheeks with a kiss, she thrust them away with an involuntary revulsion as they saw her thrust a tiresome dog.

Now Lady Clydesmore leaned back, musing of the prospects of her party. She reigned for reigning's sake; she wove for weaving's sake; she was ambitious because her nature could not choose but be so; she intrigued because she was weary of her life and forgot herself a little the quickest in these cabals. It was neither for her husband nor her sons that she laboured: if the raising of her hand could have made the one a king, she would not for his sake have raised it; if by lifting it the others could have died out of her sight and out of her memory and sunk into their graves, it would have been lifted as eagerly, as pitilessly, as ever Roman matrons gave the sign for the slaughter in the arena. But the acquisition of privilege and the vanity of her own splendid dominion were the passions of her character: she had sickened long ago of the reign of her beauty; the domain of intellectual and political pre-eminence remained to her, and she had occupied it and usurped it.

The three ladies with her were talking now of one who had also won his way to that closely-fenced and closely-crowded table-rock of political strife.

"It could not have been formed without him," said one fair politician.

"Oh, no," assented a yet warmer partisan. "He could make his own terms."

"He was moderate to be content with the Colonial," murmured the Lady of Lilliesford.

"The Board of Trade might have done?" suggested the first.

"Certainly not; he would not have taken it," negatived the second, Lady Dorénavant, with a certain contempt. "The Foreign seals now——"

"Oh, no," dissented her adversary; "we should have twenty wars on our hands in as many weeks with his brusque, brief despatches. They would be very Napoleonic; but he would say

to the Pope, 'You belong to the past: off with you!' and would write to France, 'We hate you, and you hate us: why mince the matter?' He would not be conducive to European harmony."

Lady Dorénavant gave a lazy gesture of dissent.

"Is that all you know of him? In the Foreign Office, or anywhere else, he would always do just the thing that needed to be done, and no more. He can keep Darshampton in good humour; it is more unmanageable, on the whole, than Europe."

"I agree with you," murmured a third fair Chevreuse of politics. "I believe he would hold the Foreign portfolio and hold it well. He would keep peace; but there would be no fog in his correspondence, and no beating about the bush. What he had to say would be said briefly, firmly, and with infinite tact. The only pity is—he was nobody."

"Every one has forgotten that by now," said Lady Clydesmore, with a curl of disdain on her thoughtful lips, that was followed by a darker and more bitter shadow where she sat in the shelter of the curled tropic leaves.

"No: it is never forgotten and never forgiven," said the last speaker, with delicate disdain; for she was a very keen wit, a very truthful temper, and despised her own party now and then not a little. "But, you know as well as I, we can't afford to appear to remember it. He is so much to us."

"I do not see there is anything to be forgotten," said Lady Dorénavant, who piqued herself on being positively "Red" in her political tastes in theory, but who would nevertheless never have set foot again in any house in which the order of precedence had been violated in going down to dinner and the heraldic dignities of her house been offended in any iota of ceremonial. "That is such a miserable monopoly, such an old-world opticism, to adhere so much to lineage. For my own part, I never forget that the greatest men of all nations have sprung from the people. Life is too earnest, truth too broad, for these insignificant class-distinctions."

"Quite so, dear," yawned her pretty, inconsequent antagonist. "We all say that nowadays. But why aren't you true to your theory? Why don't you let Adine marry poor Langdon?"

"That is absurd!" said the socialist peeress—a little nettled; for no one likes to be twitted with turning theories into action. "Nobody is talking of marriage: we are speaking of men who attain power without the hereditary right to it. I confess, I admire self-made men; there is such a rugged grandeur about the mere idea of all they have contested with and conquered."

Which was a beautiful absence of all prejudice on her ladyship's part, slightly nullified in its weight by the fact that she had a month before half broken her daughter's heart, and spent all her most bitter and deadly courtliness of insolence and opprobrium on that daughter's lover—a great artist, who had had the presumption to think that his fine celebrity and his gallant love might mate him with the young azure-eyed aristocrat, and in return had been stoned and pierced with a great lady's polished insults.

"Besides," she pursued, now on her favourite theme, "you cannot call *him* a self-made man: he was always among us, always at the best houses, entered Parliament at a very good age, has always known everybody and been seen everywhere. I remember his first speech so well! It was short—he had too much tact to detain the benches long—but so pithy, so trenchant, so precise to the purpose, so admirably uttered! I remember saying to poor Sir James that very night, 'See if I am not right; we shall have a recruit well worth studying and retaining there.' And he *did* see I was right."

She nestled herself among her soft cushions with complacent remembrance; she had been the first to discern the faint beams of the rising sun.

"What that man has done since then!" murmured the Countess of Clydesmore, rather to herself unconsciously than to her companions.

At that instant a hand thrust aside the sacred velvet curtain before the open folding-doors, that rarely was drawn aside save by the few privileged comers who were made free of the guild: the subject of their words and thoughts entered the boudoir. He was just then a guest for an autumnal week at Lilliesford.

Lady Clydesmore did not look up; a slight gloom came over her face, and the abrupt rapidity of entrance jarred her nerves. Lady Dorénavant smiled a bland welcome.

"Ah, Mr. Trevenna, you come to enliven us!"

"You have faith in my powers of enlivening? Well, so have I, I think. I actually once contrived to make a royal dinner only half as dull as a sermon!"

"What specific have you against dulness?"

"Don't know," answered the popular politician, shrugging his shoulders and hitting, as he usually did, the truth,—"except it may be that I never feel a dull dog myself."

"But then that's just it: how is it you *don't?*"

"Ah! that *is* just it. Can't say. Natural constitution, I suppose, and a good digestion; good conscience, if you like it better—that sounds more pretty and poetic. Though really, as a practical fact, I believe it's a good deal easier to carry a murder comfortably on one's soul than a Lord Mayor's dinner comfortably on one's chest."

"You speak as if you have tried both," said the languid, disdainful voice of his hostess from the shadow.

"So I have. I've eaten Corporation turtle, and I've murdered many a little Bill—hopeless little Bills that scarcely saw the light before I strangled them. But I can't say their slaughter was heavy to bear, whatever the debate upon them might be. Lady Dorénavant, what are you reading? Anything good?"

"An old acquaintance of yours," she said, handing him the book.

He had read it, but he turned the leaves over as though he had not, lifting his eyebrows where he lay back luxuriously coiled in the depths of a couch.

"Ah! Chandos! Frightens people dreadfully, doesn't it? Sort of Buddhism—eh? sublimated Cartesianism, intended for the thirtieth century or thereabouts? Makes a science of history, and gives a sinecure to Deity! Believes in other worlds, but smashes Providence as a used-up *Deus ex machinâ;* utterly contemns the body, and isn't very clear about the soul. That's the style, isn't it?"

The grand dark eyes of Lady Clydesmore loomed on him from her corner in the shadow.

"You travesty what you have not read," she said, slowly and curtly. "The book is a great book."

"Sorry to hear it! It won't bring him a shilling, then. As for writing all those heterodox before-your-time speculations and philosophies, it's the sheerest madness, if you want to live by what you write, as of course he does. If you're an unfrocked priest, now, or a curate without a chance of promotion, it's all very well to do it: you have a piquance about you from having stoned your own gods; and if you can't be a success, it's just as well to go in for the other side *toto corde*, and come out in full bloom a martyrdom. But just to write a 'great book,' and look to posterity to reward you—mercy alive! I'd as soon sow corn in the sea, or try to get a ladder to the stars!"

"I can believe you," said the voice of his hostess, with that veiled bitterness still in it; "no one would accuse you of doing anything without the certainty of present reward."

He laughed with the charming good humour with which he always won over the most sullen and angry mob, sooner or later, to his side.

"No: I don't 'go in for the angels.' Too unsubstantial and too solemn for me. Where's the use of working for posterity? A comet may have sent the earth fizzing into space before it's fifty years older. Besides, I've an English prejudice that real, sensible, practical work deserves its reward and gets it. I think in the long run all things bring in their net value. It's only the mortified vanity of those who carry bad goods to market that makes them start the hypothesis that they're unsaleable because they are too superior."

"They may be right sometimes, if they say—because they are too true to be welcome," said the Countess of Clydesmore, in that slow, languid, yet almost acrid tone with which she had spoken throughout from her distant nook of shadow.

"Oh, yes," he laughed, carelessly toying with the book he still held. "Chandos, here, tells a good deal too much truth: they'd forgive him his unorthodoxy sooner than they'd forgive him his accuracy. All men are candid when they're *in extremis* and have nothing left to lose,—bankrupts, beggars, moribunds, authors in the Index, and thieves in the Old Bailey!"

"You are complimentary to authors."

"Never liked them," returned the successful politician. "They *are* so unpractical. If they write fiction, it's puppets; if history, it's prejudice; if philosophy, it's cobwebs; if science, it's mares'

nests: let them take what they will, it must be more or less moonshine. Now, if I ever wrote a book——"

"What should it be?" asked his fair partisan.

"Well, it should be what everybody should like,—a true contemporary *Chronique Scandaleuse*, such as his secret police summed up to Louis Quinze, every day, of the doings of Paris. How it would sell!—specially with a tag of religion to finish, and a fine blue-light of repentance burning for the British public at the end of every wickedness! It would sell by millions where this book, that my Lady Clydesmore says is a 'great book,' sells by tens."

The languid *grandes dames* laughed softly; it was the fashion to admire and to quote all he said as "so infinitely humorous," "so admirably original!" Yet beneath the art-bloom on her cheek Lady Dorénavant felt herself turn pale. There was a family secret of a terrible shame to her house, that had been buried, as they had thought, five fathoms deep, where none could disinter it; and John Trevenna had found it out, and had let them learn that he had done so. All the weight of her vast influence, of her political favour, had been thrown into the scale many years gone by to purchase silence: yet she had never felt secure that her bribe, magnificent and mighty in profit though it was, had availed. There is no sign and seal to those bargains, and the tacit bond may any day be broken by the stronger side.

"A religious 'tag!' What a word!" smiled a radiant blonde. "I thought you were never irreverent now?"

"Never," he responded, promptly. "It never does to be unorthodox in a country where the Church is a popular prejudice——I beg pardon; I meant bulwark. I had my unregenerated days, I know, when I didn't go to church; but I hadn't heard grace said before dinner by an archbishop then; that does more than anything, I think, towards correcting one's soul, if it's a little adverse tendency towards cooling the soup. You don't talk Pantheism or Positivism when you've once stayed with a Primate. But I didn't come to chatter: I ventured into this *sanctum sanctorum* to show you these."

With which he unfolded some afternoon letters he had in his hand, and, lounging comfortably in that velvet nest, by the side of the priestess of his own especial party, went deep with her into their various contents and their news political,—as deep, at least, as he chose to go. He always satisfied his confidantes that they knew as much as he did; but he always spread the surface: he never showed the whole. There is not an art so delicate and so full of use as that art of apparent frankness: it conciliated the very women who had been his deadliest foes, and, while they imagined themselves his allies, they became at his fancy his dupes. They were his scouts, his sharpshooters, his skirmishers, his spies, those dainty, haughty, high-bred patrician châtelaines; they fetched and carried, they parried and bribed, for him; they played into his hands, and they worked out his will; and they never knew it, but all the while thought themselves condescending with a superb grace and tact to secure a serviceable recruit, and guessed no more the remorseless and vulgar uses to which he turned them than the

sun guesses the use that photography makes of his glory when it turns his rays into detectives and brings them as witness in law-courts.

He stayed there some twenty minutes; the boudoir was not seldom a cabinet council-room in the recesses, and all the ladies in it now were for him and were with him. He never sought women,—not a whit; they must come to him, must need him, and must serve him; but he knew how to turn to account better than any man living all their armoury of slender, invincible, damascened weapons,—the better because no glance of lustrous eyes ever had power to quicken his pulse one beat, because the softest voice that ever wooed his ear never had charm to lull his wisdom for a second. Love was a trumpery nonsense that never could enter the virile sagacity of Trevenna's mind. And now, when he had done with the ladies, he went to play rackets with the young Lord Lilliesford, the eldest son of the house.

He knew how to do this sort of thing,—how to enter with infinite glee into a boy's sports, yet how never to risk losing the faith he had impressed men with in his unerring acumen and practical talents. Every one felt the contagion of the bright, vivacious, untiring good humour which could make a leading politician love a lark like an Etonian, and it was not assumed with him. He was essentially full of animal spirits, and never had to simulate them by any hazard. It was one of the chief secrets of his social success: men who might have feared him or mistrusted him whilst they were with him in the political field lost their awe or their distrust, and could not choose but warm to him, when they saw him taking a blind fence "like a good 'un," telling mischievous stories in a smoking-room, or heartily snowballing public-school lads on the terraces of some famous house.

"Look at him playing with that boy! What a capital fellow he is! Goes in for it, by George, as if he hadn't anything else to live for!" said a peer, Lord Dallerstone, as he watched the science with which Trevenna caught the ball on his racket. He had ceased to be "Charlie," and had left far behind him the troubles of his F. O. days of dandyism and "dead money;" but he had never forgotten Trevenna's aid, and did him in repayment many a public service with most loyal gratitude. The popular favourite had always had the knack of so throwing his crumbs upon the waters that they returned to him in whole quarterns of wheaten bread.

Lady Clydesmore gave a careless glance at the game, then turned away with an imperceptible shudder. The haughty grace of her young son, so like her own, had caught her eyes, and she held him in a bitter aversion for his father's sake.

She would have condemned with all the icy severity of a patrician matron the errors of a too ardent passion, the devoted self-abandonment of an uncalculating love; but she placed no check on the silent, unseen indulgence of an intense abhorrence, that made her husband feel like a whipped hound under the lash of her unuttered scorn, and her children shrink from the frozen apathy of her fair face.

"There are serious complications," said the Earl, musingly, after a lengthened conversation with his guest, in a ride which had succeeded to the rackets. His party did not altogether relish union with the Darshampton representative, but they were glad of his alliance and dared not brook his opposition.

"I don't see anything that need disturb us," said Trevenna, carelessly. He made no solemn mysteries of *his* political views: he always showed his cards frankly,—as frankly as the Greek shows them to the watching *galérie* when he knows the marks upon the backs of them are only to be traced by his own eye. "On the contrary, when the House meets, we shall have a good working majority that, well handled, should keep us in for years. If there be no internal dissensions among us, there can be positively nothing that can unseat us for sessions, unless very unlooked-for contingencies arise. You know we've such a good cry:—we're all for the people!"

He laughed a little as he said it. To Trevenna's acute mind, there was always a good bit of absurdity in the political dance of his *burattini*, and while he used his marionettes with all the gravity needful, he could not help being tickled at the gaping national audience which believed in them and never spied out the strings.

"Their interests, indeed, are always first at my heart," said the Earl, who was in the ministry himself, was a strict Churchman, and was considered a great philanthropist. "The country trusts no one better than yourself: in real truth, there are few, if any, to whom it owes more."

"You do me much honour by such an opinion," bowed Trevenna, who managed the noble lord as he liked. "It is my highest ambition to serve the nation to the best of my insignificant powers; but meanwhile I am quite content to yield the *pas* to men of your rank and weight."

"Sensible fellow," thought the lord; "so moderate! Who can be so blind as to accuse him of Socialism?"

"*Pro me* is more my cry than *pro patriâ*. I'm a selfish man," laughed Trevenna, with that confession of egotism which sounded so charmingly frank. "I don't pretend to be among the 'idealists.' Apropos, have you read that new book by Chandos? The Countess thinks very highly of it."

The Earl reddened: he had never ceased to be jealous of the man he had supplanted,—of the man he knew his wife still loved.

"I never read his books," he said, frigidly. "His influence is widely fatal. I am happy to think your acquaintance with him has been long at an end."

"Oh, we were old comrades in my wild and unconverted days. *I* should never have dropped him, indeed, for old acquaintance' sake; but years ago—time of his crash—he behaved ungratefully to me, very badly, on my word!—after I'd been slaving my life out for him, too. I'm not a sensitive man,—never was; but that cut me up a good deal."

"Ah! I am not surprised to hear it. It is singular that great genius is almost always companioned with so much depravity!"

Trevenna laughed.

"Thank God, he didn't give me genius,—only talent. Talent wears well, genius wears itself out; talent drives a snug brougham in fact, genius drives a sun-chariot in fancy; talent keeps to earth and fattens there, genius soars to the empyrean to get picked by every kite that flies. Talent's the port and the venison, genius the seltzer and soufflés, of life. The man who has talent sails successfully on the top of the wave; the man with genius beats himself to pieces, fifty to one, on the first rock ahead. Ah! there's our very man of genius's lost Clarencieux. Just see the tops of the towers. Would you mind riding over?"

The Earl gave a hurried though bland dissent.

"Pardon me: pray ride there if you wish; but I have promised to visit a tenant who is, I sadly fear, dying. We are close to his farm now. Call for me as you come back. The poor man begged to see me; and there are high and holy duties which one must not neglect, even when they are irksome."

"High and holy fiddlesticks, my friend! You're a very poor hypocrite, but you're a very good card," thought Trevenna, as they parted. Lord Clydesmore, with his irreproachable moral character, great wealth, and solid standing in public life, was one of his prize puppets in the ballet that he made all his fantoccini dance, while he turned the handle of the barrel-organ to what tune he would.

Trevenna's hatred was class-hatred. Could he have followed the bent of his mind, he would have had as little scruple and as much zest in the sweeping away of the Optimates as Marius had in their slaughter. He would have held back his hand from their extermination as little as did the ruthless old plebeian, hating them as Marius hated the men who had worn the golden amulet and the purple robe whilst he was following the ploughshare over the heavy clods of the tillage. This animosity was strong in Trevenna; nothing could cool it, nothing soften it; success in no way changed it, for in success he saw that these, his born foes as he thought them, dreaded him, but detested him. The bitterness was oddly woven in with the brightness and the vigour of his nature, otherwise too healthy and too well balanced to cherish passion; but it was deathless with him.

Still, he was too acute a man to let this appear in his public or private life: he appreciated too ably the temper of his times and his country to allow this wholesale enmity to be betrayed. Trevenna would have enjoyed to be the leader of a great revolution; but he had no ambition to remain a popular demagogue in an anti-revolutionary nation. He considered it very unpractical and unprofitable, and, while he cared not one whit for all the creeds and principles in the world, he cared very heartily for the solid advantages and the real power that he set himself to win. The pure impersonal longing of a Vergniaud or a Buzot, the sublime devotion of a Washington or a Hampden, were utterly incomprehensible to him. Trevenna was too thoroughly English to have a touch of "idealism," and not to measure all things, principles included, by the pocket. Had he flung himself headlong into the

cause of the people, and into the service of a republican code, he would have been a far better and more honest man than he was; but he would not have been so clever, and he would not, assuredly, have been so successful. He knew what he was about too well to tie himself to a principle; the only principle he ever consistently followed was his own interest. He was a man who could tell the temper of the hour he lived in to a miracle, and adapt himself to it with a marvellous tact and advantage. They who do this are not the highest order of public men, but they are invariably the most successful and most popular. If a genuine loyalty to any creed could once have fairly taken hold on him, it would have gone far to redeem him; but it could not. His hate was strong against an order, certainly; but his solitary creed was a very simple one,—his own self-advancement.

He rode now by himself, on a ride that he usually took whenever he was staying at Lilliesford: he rode towards Clarencieux. A few miles of fair speed brought him within sight of the magnificence of the building, with the glow of the sun on its innumerable windows, and the upward-stretching masses of the rising woods at its back. It was grand, historic, inexpressibly beautiful in the decline of the day, with the golden haze over its dark sweep of endless woodland, and the rush of water beneath the twilight of the boughs, the only sound on the air. A stranger coming thus upon it would have paused involuntarily at the solemnity of its splendour of sea and land, of hill and vale: Trevenna checked his horse, and gazed at it with a smile.

"'The glory has departed, and his place shall know him no more,'" he muttered. "How scriptural I grow! Ah! he's gone for ever! And *I* could buy that now; I will buy it, too, just to cut the forests down, and turn the pictures to the wall, and send the last marquis's coronet to the smelting-shop. He is gone for ever, and I come here as a Cabinet minister. Vengeance is a good Madeira: it gets mellower by keeping. There is nothing on earth so sweet, except its twin—Success!"

Seventeen years had gone by since he had first taken his vengeance; but whenever, in the full and rapid whirl of his busy life, he had time to remember and to look back, it was sweeter than of old, even to him,—deeper, richer, fuller of flavour, as it were, like the wine with which he compared it.

A labourer near him was working at a sunken fence in the deer-forest. The man looked at him, knowing his face.

Trevenna, always communicative and always good-naturedly familiar with the working-classes,—it was a part of his stock-in-trade,—nodded to him.

"Fine day, my good fellow. Have you an easy time of it on these lands?"

"Main and easy, sir," answered the man, thrusting his spade into the soil with his heel, and standing at leisure for a talk. "There's naught to complain of hereabouts."

"Glad to hear it," said Trevenna; though he thought to himself, "If everybody gave your answer, where the deuce would all

politics and *our* trade be?" "So you're all content, are you, under the French Duc?"

The hedger and ditcher took his spade up with some clods of earth on it, turned them thoughtfully, as though there were consolation in the act, patted them, and looked up again. "The duke's a good master, and a free giver,—I ain't a-saying a word agen him; but——"

"But what? What else the dickens can you want, my man?"

he labourer lowered his voice, and uncovered his head. "Sir, want *him*."

"Him? Whom?"

"Him as we have lost this many year, sir," said the man, gravely and gently, leaning his arms on his spade. "We ha'n't a-forgot him,—we ha'n't. Not none on us."

"Indeed, my good fellow," laughed Trevenna, with a petulant anger in him that the exiled man should be remembered even by this labourer in the deer-forest, "you are uncommonly loyal for nothing. He thought deuced little about you."

"That's as may be, sir. He was a gay gentleman, and had many things to please him, and that like; but he was a good master to the poor, and we was proud on him, we was; that's just it,—proud on him," continued the hedger and ditcher, with a steady resolve and a wistful regret commingled. "We won't see his like again; and the country-side ha'n't been the same since he was took from us. Old Harold Gelart, he died ten year and more ago; but his death-word was for him as we lost. 'Bring him back!' he cries; 'bring him back!' and he looks wild-like as he says it, and dies."

The speaker stooped and thrust his spade afresh into the rich, damp earth; he felt a choking in his throat. Trevenna dug the spur into his horse's flank, and urged him forward. It incensed him that he could not hurl down Chandos from this last throne left him,—the hearts and the memories of his people.

The labourer looked up once more, touching his hat with an eager anxiety. "I beg pardon, sir, but—you was his friend, you were: can't you tell me? A'n't there *no* hope we'll ever have him back?"

Trevenna laughed, and threw him down a half-crown.

"Not the faintest, my man. When you see those towers walk out and sit in the sea!—not till then. Beggared gentlemen don't get out of beggary quite so easily."

And he rode on at a hand-gallop.

'Mercy! what fools these clods are!" he thought. "How they remember! Seventeen years! Why, in the world, there, it's time enough for us to recast Europe, and knock down kings, and pull up old religions and plant new ones, and bury whole generations and forget 'em again, and cry, 'Le Roi est mort! Vive le Roi!' fifty times over; and here are these dolts under their forests sleep the years away in idiocy, and dream of a prodigal and a bankrupt whom they haven't seen for half a lifetime!"

It incensed him that there should remain to the disinherited even such shadowy remnant of his forfeited royalty as lingered in the

remembrance of these peasantry. He could not forgive the throne that the exile still held in the hearts of his lost people.

One other, as well as he, thought of Chandos in that moment. The mistress of Lilliesford sat alone in her writing-cabinet, and on the chillness of her face there was the mournful agitation which trembles on the cold surface of waters when the dead float below them. The dead were rising now beneath her icy calm,—dead words, dead days, dead love. In her hand, just taken out of a secret drawer, were some faded letters,—tender notes, short and graceful, such as are written by those who love, in days when they meet wellnigh every hour.

The wife whom the world quoted for her haughty honour, her unblemished name, the chaste purity of her proud life, looked on them till her head drooped, and her eyes grew dim with a thirsty pain, and her lips quivered as she gazed. She had forsaken him; but she knew now that she had erred to him. She would have given her life now to have felt his kiss once more upon her lips.

Though the traffic had been sanctioned by the Church, she had been in no sense superior to any courtesan who sells her beauty for men's gold, when she had sold her own in barter for the rank she held, for the things of wealth that were about her, for the possessions of a husband she scorned and hated. And in that moment of weakness she would have given them all back for one hour of the love that she had lost.

CHAPTER III.

"HE WHO ENDURES CONQUERS."

UNDER the deep leaves of Fontainebleau, in the heart of the forest, in the golden pomp of early autumn, when only a few trees were bronzed with the reddening flush of the waning summer, there stood an antique wooden building, half lodge, half châlet, all covered with the quaint floral and faun carvings of the Moyen Age, and buried away beneath dense oak-boughs and the dark spreading fans of sea-pines. It was old, dark, fantastic, lonely; yet from under its low-peaked roof music was floating out like a Mass of Palestrina's from within a chamber dark and tranquil as an oratory.

The musicians were seated in the glow of a western afternoon sun, that shone all amber and crimson and mellow through the open, painted panes. They were strangely dissimilar, yet bound together by one love,—their Art. The first was a grand old Roman, like a picture of Bassano; the second a South German, with a fair, delicate head, spiritualized and attenuated as Schiller's; a third was a little, nut-brown, withered, silent creature, ugly and uncouth as Caliban; the leader was a cripple, with whose name the world had come to associate the most poetic and ethereal harmonies

that ever rebuked the lusts and the greed of its passions and cares. They were often together, these four brothers in art, and no jealousies ever stirred amidst them, though they all served the same mistress; three of them implicitly loved and implicitly followed the fourth, though he never asked or thought of mastery, but was still humble in his great powers as a child, still thought the best that he could reach so poor beside his dreams of excellence. The world treasured his works, and paid lavishly with its gold for the smallest fragment of his creations, the slightest and briefest of his poems of sound; but this brought him no vanity, no self-adoration. He worshipped his art too patiently, too perfectly, ever to think himself more than a poor interpreter, at his uttermost, of all the beauty that he knew was in her. Success makes many men drunk as with eating of the lotus-lily; success only made Guido Lulli scorn himself that he could not tell men better all the sublime things his art taught him.

Their music filled the chamber with its glory, and that glory flushed his face and lit his eyes as it had always power to do, as the world had now seen it in the moments of his triumphs, until it had learned to know that the feeble visionary whom it called a fool was higher and holier than it in all its stirring strength and wealth. He roused to life the beating of its purer heart; he led it towards God better than any priest or creed. But he held himself throughout but an unworthy priest of the mighty hierarchy of melody; he held himself but a feeble exponent of all the glory, unseen of men, that with his dreams was opened to him. They thought and called him great; he knew himself unwise and faint of utterance as a young child.

Against the casement leaned one whom the Hebrew lad Agostino had likened in his youth to David of Israel in the fulness of royalty, when the smile of women and the sun of Palestine had their fairest light for the golden-haired, golden-crowned king; whom the young Tuscan Castalia had likened now to David when his royalty still was with him, but when the treachery of men had eaten into his soul, and the heat and burden of battle darkened his sight, and the shadows of night lengthened long in his path.

Chandos came here as men in the old monastic days came, war-worn and combat-wearied, into the hush, and the majesty, and the subdued colour-glow of the abbey sanctuaries, to leave their arms and their foes without for a while and forgotten, and to lie down to rest for a brief hour on the peaceful altars where in the silence they remembered God.

He was changed,—utterly changed; not so much in his face or his form; the beauty with which nature had dowered him so lavishly could not perish, except with death itself; and though the brilliance, the carelessness, the gay and cloudless light which had made painters paint him as the Sun-god were gone, the grave and serene melancholy, the deep and weary thought, which were upon his features now shadowed them indeed, but gave them a yet higher, a yet grander cast: it had the power of Lucretius; it had the weariness of Milton. Dead in him for ever, lost never again

to be recovered, were the brightness, the splendour, the radiant and fearless lustre, of his early years: they had been killed,—killed by a merciless hand,—and could no more revive than the slaughtered can revive in their tombs. Yet not wholly had calamity conquered him; and from the black depths into which misery had thrust him to die like a drowned dog, he had risen with a force of resistance that in some sense had wrung a victory from the fate that sought to crush him.

In the old court of the Rue du Temple he had accepted adversity, and lived for the sake of the honour of his fathers, of the dignity of his manhood, of the heritage of his genius. From that hour, though he had longed as the tortured long for death many a time, he had never swerved from the path he had taken; in the arid, lifeless, burning desert-waste around him he had gone on, resolute and unbeaten, wresting from its very loneliness and barrenness the desert-gifts of strength and silence. His nature was one to loathe the burden of existence unless existence were with every breath enjoyment; yet when every breath was pain he bore with it as men whose tempers were far stronger and more braced by training might never have found ability to do,—bore with it for the sake of the loftier things, the prouder powers, that would not die in him, and that naught except dishonour or his own will could slay.

The little gold given for the silver collar had sufficed to keep life in him a few days; when those were ended, he had gone to the house at which the French editions of his works had been produced, and asked the chiefs of it simply for work. The heads of the firm, touched to more pity than they dared express, gave what he sought,—classical work, which, though but the labours of routine and of compilation, still brought his thoughts back perforce to the Greek studies that had ever been his best-beloved treasuries of meditation and of knowledge. He laboured for his bare subsistence,—for his day's maintenance; but the exertion brought its reward. It gave him time to breathe, to think, to collect his efforts and his energies; for his intellect seemed dead, and his thoughts numb. He wondered if it were true that the world had told him so brief a time ago that he had genius. Genius!—his very brain seemed dull as lead, hot as flame. Yet he took the sheer laborious, mechanical work, and he bent himself to it; he bound his mind to the hard mental labour as a galley-slave is chained to his oar; and he who had never known an hour's toil, spent day after day, month after month, in the thankless, unremitting mental travail. It brought its recompense: his mind through it regained its balance, his reason its tone; the compulsory exertion did for him what nothing else could. It took him by degrees back into that impersonal life which is the surest consolation the world holds; it revived the lost tastes, it reopened the deep scholarship, that even in his gayest years had been one of his best-loved pursuits; it led him to take refuge in those vast questions beside which the griefs and joys of life alike are dwarfed,—those resources of the intellect

which are the best companion and the truest friend of one who has once known them and loved them. In his past career he had never exerted all the powers that nature had gifted him with; the very facility of his talents had prevented it, and brilliant trifles had rather been their fruit than anything wider or weightier. Now in the treasuries of study and in the solace of composition he alike found a career and a hope, an ambition and a consolation.

The ruin that had stripped him of all else taught him to fathom the depths of his own attainments. He had in him the gifts of a Goethe; but it was only under adversity that these reached their stature and bore their fruit.

When the world had forgotten for some years, or, if it ever remembered him, thought he had killed himself, it learned this suddenly and with amazement. His name once more became public,—never popular, but something much higher. He was condemned, reviled, wondered at, called many bitter names; but his thoughts were heard, and had their harvest. Aristocratic as his tastes were, and proud though he had been termed, he had always had much that was democratic in his opinions; for he had ever measured men by their minds, not their stations; such freedom was in his works, and they had done that for which the song of the Venetian youths had thanked him. Against much antagonism, and slowly in the course of time, he won fame. Riches he never made; he was poor still; but he was nearer the fulfilment of the promise of his childhood now, when the chief sum of the world was against him, than in the days of his prosperity, when the whole world lay at his feet. Happiness he had not; it could be with no man who had such losses ever in his memory as his; but some peace came to him; a great and a pure ambition was his companion and his consoler, and a grander element was woven in his character than fair fortune would have ever brought to light. England he never saw. The intercession of his relations or his acquaintance might with ease have procured him affluent sinecures; but he would have held it degradation deep as shame to have taken them. By his own folly his ruin had been wrought; by his own labour alone would he repel it and endeavour to repair it. He accepted poverty, and lived in exile, associating with many of the greatest thinkers of Europe; but into the pale of the fashionable world he had once led he never wandered, and in the palaces in which he had once been the idol of all eyes he was never seen. The friends of that past time knew of him indeed by the intellectual renown that he had won, but it was very rarely that they looked upon his face. Cynic he could not grow; he did not curse the world because to him it had been base; he believed in noble lives and staunch fidelities though treachery had trepanned and love abandoned him The bitterness of Timon could have no lodging with him; but an unspeakable weariness often came on him.

He had lost so much; and one loss—that of Clarencieux—gnawed ever at his heart with an unceasing pang. There were times when

he longed for his perished happiness with the passion with which an exile longs for the light of his native sun.

He listened now to the melodies that filled the chamber. Lulli's was the sole life which had been faithful to him, save that of the dog, buried now under Sicilian orange-boughs, in the grave to which old age had banished it, but lamented and remembered with more justice than many a human friend is regretted and mourned. The music, a new opera-overture of the Provençal's, closed with its noblest harmonies, reeling through the air like a young Bacchus ivy-crowned. Then it stayed suddenly, the hands that drew out its charmed sounds pausing as moved by one impulse; three of them bowed their heads.

"It will be great," they said, reverently, adding no other word, and went their way silently and left the chamber. Guido Lulli was alone with his guest. The victorious radiance, the sovereignty in his own realms, that had been on him as he called out to existence the supremacy of his own creations, faded into the hesitating, doubting hope of a child who seeks the praise of a voice he loves.

"And you, Monseigneur?" he said, appealingly. "Can you say, too, it will be great?"

"You ask *me*, Lulli? The world has long told you, and truly, that you can give it nothing that is not so. You surpass yourself here; it will be noble music,—nobler even than anything of yours."

The eyes of the cripple beamed. The world had long crowned him with the *Delphica laurus*, yet he still came with the humility of a child to receive the laurel he loved best in the words of his old master.

"The world may have told me, monseigneur, but that were nothing unless you spoke also. What would the world have ever known or heeded of me without your aid? Known of *me*, do I say? It is not that I heed; it is my works. I shall pass away, but they will endure; my body will go to corruption, but they will have immortality. I thank God and you, not the world, that what is great in me will not perish with what is weak and vile."

"I understand you; others might not," answered Chandos, as he looked at the delicate kindling face of the only man who had given him back fidelity and gratitude,—a face that time had changed in so little, save in the white threads that gleamed among the dark masses of hair. "Men prostitute their genius now, as the courtesan her beauty; they think little—think nothing—of impersonal things. Hypocrisy pays; they supply it. Were blasphemy the better investment, they would trade in it. You are fortunate in one thing; you speak in a language that cannot be cavilled at or misunderstood."

"But deaf ears were turned to it till, through you, the disbelievers listened."

"Hush! Let the dead bury their dead. I do not look back; I wish that no one should."

"But I cannot forget! Such debts as mine are not scored out."

"In *your* nature. Yet I served many more than I served you. You are the only one who remembers it."

He spoke without bitterness; but the words were the more profoundly sad because there was no taint of acrid feeling in them. Lulli glanced at him with an anxious reverence.

"You served so many! yes; and they were curs who tore down one by whom they had been fed,—one whom they had fawned on for a word of notice! The vilest of them all, what is he now? High in honour among men."

A darkness passed over his listener's face, a gloom like night, yet a disdain as strong as it was silent,—such a look as might come upon the face of a man who saw one whom he knew assassin and traitor courted and adored by the peoples.

"Ah! give him your scorn now. One day you shall give him your vengeance!" cried the musician, with that passionate desire of revenge which he could never, under any wrongs, have known on his own behalf, but which he had felt for Valeria, and which he felt for Chandos.

Chandos' head drooped slightly where he sat, and into his eyes came the shadows of a thousand bitter memories.

"Perhaps," he said, under his breath.

The evil tempted him; if ever it passed into his hands, its widest exercise could be no more than justice. In his dark hours there were times when no other thing looked worth the living for, or worth the seeking, except this,—vengeance upon his traitor.

Lulli gazed at him regretfully and with self-reproach; he had not meant to stir these deep-closed poisonous pools of deadly recollection; he had not meant to recall a past that was, by a command he obeyed with the docile obedience of a dog, never named between them. His music was, to the man he honoured, as the music of the young Israelite was to the soul of the great stricken king whom men forsook and God abandoned. His conscience and his love alike smote him for having jarred on these forbidden chords, and wrought harm instead of bringing consolation.

He leaned forward, and his voice was infinitely sweet.

"Forgive me. You have loved truth, and served men through all, despite all; it is not to you that I should talk of such a tiger's lust as vengeance, though vengeance *there* were righteous. If they had not driven you from your paradise, would you ever have been your greatest? If you had not been forced from your rose-gardens out into the waste of the desert, would you ever have known your strength? Till you ceased to enjoy, you were ignorant how to endure."

The words were true. The bread of bitterness is the food on which men grow to their fullest stature; the waters of bitterness are the debatable ford through which they reach the shores of wisdom; the ashes boldly grasped and eaten without faltering are the price that must be paid for the golden fruit of knowledge. The swimmer cannot tell his strength till he has gone through the wild force of opposing waves; the great man cannot tell the might of his hand

and the power of his resistance till he has wrestled with the angel of adversity, and held it close till it has blessed him.

Still, the thought will arise, Is the knowledge worth its purchase? Is it not better to lie softly in the light of laughing suns than to pass through the blackness of the salt sea-storm out of pity for men who will revile the pursuit of a phantom goal, that may be but a mirage when all is over?

This thought was with him now.

"God knows!" he said. "Do not speak against my golden days; they were very dear to me. I think I was a better man in them than I have ever been in my exile. A happy life—a life that knows and gives happiness as the sunlight; it cannot last on earth, maybe, but it is *life* as no other is, while it does."

Lulli was silent. The yearning regret that unconsciously escaped in the reply pierced him to the heart, even though he, to whom existence had been one long spell of physical pain, and to whom all strength and joy were unknown, could but dimly feel all that the man who spoke to him looked back to with so passionate a longing.

"The revellers in Florence," he murmured, softly, "had delight and gladness, and made of life an unbroken festa, while Dante was in exile. Who thinks of them now?—even of their names? But on *his* door is written, 'Qui nacqui il divino Poeta.'"

Chandos rose with a smile—a smile in which there was a weariness beyond words.

"A tardy and an empty recompense! While they write on his door to-day, reviling those who were blind in his generation, they repeat in their own times the blindness, and the persecution to free thought, by which the poet and the thinker suffered then and suffer still."

Throughout the years which had gone by since the fall of his high estate, no lamentation, no recrimination, had ever been heard to pass his lips. When the tidings floated to him of success piled on success that his enemy and his traitor achieved, he listened in silence, too proud to condemn what was beneath envy and beyond vengeance. Men sought oftentimes to make him speak of the past and speak of Trevenna; they never succeeded. He held his peace, keeping patience with a force of control which amazed and bewildered those who had known him as an effeminate, self-indulged voluptuary, and had looked from him for a suicide's story, or, at best, for a bitter upbraiding of the curse of fate. They never heard a word from him either of regret at his own ruin or of anger at his debtor's success. He endured in as absolute a silence as ever an Indian endured when bound to the pyre. To two only, two who alone remained to him out of the throngs who had once thought no honour higher than to claim his friendship, did he ever speak either of his fate or of his foe, and to them he spoke but reluctantly. They were Lulli and Philippe d'Orvâle.

The lustre of the descending sun was bright through all the forest-glades as he left the musician's house now, and went alone through the great aisles of oak and elm. The love of the earth's

freshness and fragrance and beauty would never die in him; he had too much of Shelley's nature. The bleakness of poverty, the narrow rigidity of want, the colourlessness of life without the glow of passion, the warmth of pleasure, the vividness of sensuous charms and sensuous delights, the richness of luxury, and the power of possession, all these, which he had known in their deprivation and their misery, had not altered this in him; and the chief solace of his life had been the consolation that he had been able by his temperament to find in the antique tranquillity of the cities of Italy, in the solemn repose of mighty Alps, in the intense splendour of Oriental landscape. The artist and the poet were too closely blent in him for him ever to cease to heed these things; and yet there were times when there was in them for him an anguish that seemed to pass his strength. He had once looked on them with such careless eyes of sunlit joy, with the warmth of their suns on woman's cheeks, and the laughter of idle summer-day love on their air! There are many natures, steel knit, Puritan, austere, narrow in limit and in sight, which never know what it is to enjoy, and never are conscious of their loss; but to his, and to characters like his, life without this divine power of enjoyment differs in little—differs in nothing of value—from death.

Now, as he went through the woodland shades, with the checkered light across the moss of the paths, his heart went back to the time of his youth, the time when no other doubt had rested on him in such forest-luxuriance than to ask,—

> "Oh, which were best, to roam or rest?
> The land's lap or the water's breast?
> To sleep on yellow millet-sheaves,
> Or swim in lucid shadows just
> Eluding water-lily leaves?
> Which life were best on summer eves?"

It might be true, as the French cripple had said, that he was greater now than he had been then—that in conflict he had gained, and had become that which he would never have done or been in the abundance, the indolence, the shadowless content, and the royal dominion of his epicurean years. But for himself—in many moments, at the least—the vanity in all things, in wisdom as in riches, that Ecclesiastes laments, smote him hard; and he would have given the fame of a Plato, of an Antoninus, of a Dante, of a Shakspeare, to have back one day of that glorious and golden time!

The sun had wellnigh set; here, in the darkness of the oak-glades, there was little but a dusky, ruddy glow, fitful and flame-like. He passed slowly onward; his head was uncovered, for the air was sultry, and such breeze as arose was welcome; here and there a stray lingering sunbeam touched the fairness of his hair; otherwise the depth of the forest-shadow was on his face, that wore ever now, though it was serene in repose and its smile was infinitely sweet, the weariness and the dignity of pain silently borne, which long ago had hushed with their royalty of resolve and of suffering the hungry crowd gathered in the porphyry chamber.

An artist, hidden among the thickness of the leaves, sketching, looked up as his step crushed the grasses—a swift, slight, breathless look; then, as though he saw some ghost of a dead age, the painter shivered, and let fall his brushes, and cowered down into the gloom of the tall ferns with the shrinking horror of a frightened hare.

"Ah, Christ!" he murmured, in Spanish, "how weary he looks of his exile! Misery has not embittered him. He must have a rare nature. If I had found strength to tell him all that night in the street, how would it have been now? It could not have been worse with *us;* and it was an Iscariot's sin only to know,—to share!"

Chandos passed onward, not seeing him there beneath the shelter of the spreading ferns; his thoughts were sunk far in the past. He had met his fate with a tranquil endurance, with the proud and uncomplaining temper of his race, which had in all centuries risen out of the softness of voluptuous indulgence to encounter misfortune grandly; but not the less was life very joyless to him, and the bitterness of its vain toil oftentimes pursued and mocked him. As he went, on the silence rang the clear mellow notes of a hunting-horn, and the echo of a horse's feet; into the open green plateau immediately below the rising ground on which he was, a horseman dashed rapidly, and reined up, looking about him,—a court guest, by the court hunting-dress he wore, with its scarlet and green and gold, and its gold-handled forest-knife.

"Holà! has the Palace party passed?"

As he glanced up, the words died on the speaker's lips; for the first time their eyes met since the night in the Rue du Temple. In the red, faint, lowering light, under the dense shade of the oak-boughs, with the twilight of the autumn-bronzed leaves flung heavily down between them, Trevenna saw him where he stood on the slope, with the black wall of foliage behind him, and a single faint ray of the declining sun shed full across his eyes, that were filling dark as night with the sudden upleaping of silent passions, of thronging memories, of unavenged and unextinguished wrongs.

When they had last met, the murderous hand of his traitor had flung him down on the blood-stained stones of the old monastic court, and had left him to perish as he might in the heart of the sleeping city, in the cold of the winter's night. When they had last met, John Trevenna had cursed him where he lay senseless, and had wished his father's soul could know his ruin, and had believed no more that the life he had destroyed would ever again be raised among living men, and gather strength to vanquish and endure, than if he had struck to its heart with a knife and flung the corpse out to the river.

For the first moment there was no memory on either save that memory, and Trevenna's face paled and lost its healthful glow. He had known that his prey had survived to bear calamity and exile and follow the guidance of a pure and impersonal ambition; the world had often spoken each other's names on their ears; but they had never met until now—now when the form of Chandos rose

before him in the reddened sullen glow of the dim forest-aisles like a resurrection from the grave. And, in the first moment, all his intensity of hate revived in its ancient lust, burning in him none the less, but the more, because it had wreaked its worst to satiety. He hated to think Chandos lived; he hated to know he had not sunk, body and mind, into debauchery and insanity; he hated the very beauty that he knew so well of old, because years and pain would not destroy it!

Then the insolence, the mockery, the audacious greedy exultation of his triumph governed him alone; the pride of success and supremacy made him feel drunk with the joy of his victory. He bowed to his saddle with a contemptuous reverence.

"Ah, *beau sire!* it is many years since *we* met. We said once we'd see which made the best thing of life, you, the visionary, or I, the materialist. I think I've won, far and away, eh? The fable says iron pots and china pots can't swim down the stream together; your dainty patrician king's-pattern Sèvres soon smashed and swamped among the bulrushes; my nameless, ugly, battered two-penny tin pipkin got clear of all shoals, and came safe into port, you see. I was your palace jester once: what do you think of my success now?"

Chandos, raised above him by the rocky slope on which he stood, looked down and gazed at him full in the eyes: for the instant, Trevenna would have quailed less if a dagger had been at his throat. Neither shame nor conscience smote him; but for the instant some touch of dread, some throb of what was wellnigh fear, came to him, as the voice that had used to be so familiar on his ear, and that had been unheard through so many years of silence, fell on his ear in the hush of the forest, clear, low, cold as ice, with the quiver of a mighty passion in it.

"I think it great as your infamy, great as your treachery; greater it cannot be."

Trevenna laughed: his savage mirth, his taunting buffoonery, his unreined, exulting malice of triumph, were all let loose by the scorn that cut him like a scourge, and which he hated because he knew that, however high he rose, however proud his rank, however unassailable his station, this one man knew all that he had once been, knew whose hand had first raised him, knew that he was the vilest ingrate that ever sold his friend.

"Whew!" he cried; "you are as haughty as ever. How do they stand that, now you're only a heterodox author with a dubious reputation? You are bitter on me: well, I can forgive that. 'Tisn't pleasant, I dare say, to have sparkled like a firework and then gone out into darkness,—a failure! But you'd ten years of it, you know; and it's my turn now. I'm a Right Hon. and a millionaire; I'm a Cabinet minister, and I'm staying at court. I mean to die in the Lords, if I don't die in the Lord; and I'm only waiting for the 'mad duke's' death to go and buy Clarencieux When I retire into the Peers' Paradise, I'll take my title after it—John Trevenna, Baron Clarencieux! Won't it sound well, eh?"

With a single leap, light, resistless, unerring as in his earliest

years, Chandos leaped down the slope on which he stood, his face darkly flushed, his lips set straight and stern in the shadowy fiery autumn light; with the swiftness and force of a panther's spring he threw himself on Trevenna, swaying him back off his saddle and out of his stirrups to the ground, while the horse, let loose from the weight of its rider, tossed its head impatient in the air and galloped alone down the glade.

"You make me vile as yourself! Dare to own or to taint Clarencieux, and—as we both live—I will kill you!"

The words were low breathed in his foe's ear as he bore him backwards, but the more deadly in meaning and in menace for that; then he shook Trevenna from him and left him, and plunged down into the dark thick depths of the leaves. He knew if he stayed to look on at his debtor the mere brute instincts, the sheer Cain-like passions, which slumber in all, would conquer him and force him on to some madness or some crime. The voice of his tempter and betrayer had come back on him across the wide waste of spent and desert years, and had brought the passions and the shame and the despair of his conquered ruin fresh on him, as though known but yesterday.

"Oh, God!" he thought, "what have I vanquished, what have I learned? This man makes me a brute like himself; one trial, and my creeds and my patience and my strength break like reeds!"

For Trevenna had been the bane, the temptation, the tyrant, the poisoner, of all his life, and was so still. Through his foe even the pure and lofty hopes which had alone sustained him were broken and polluted. This man had fame and success in a world that applauded him! What was renown worth, since it went to such as this mocker?—a crown of rotten rushes, an empty bladder blown by lying lips, a meed to the one who dupes a blind world best, a prize that goes to the stump-orator, to the spangled mountebank, to the blatant charlatan, to the trained posture-maker of political and intellectual life! What avail was it to labour for mankind, when this ingrate was their elected leader, their accepted representative? What worth to toil for liberty and tolerance, when the one whom humanity crowned was the ablest trickster, the adroitest mime, the cheat who could best hide the false ace in his sleeve by a face of laughing candour and a fraud of forged honesty?

Trevenna had robbed him of all; Trevenna had wellnigh robbed him now of the only solace that his life had left. The success of his traitor made him doubt truth itself.

CHAPTER IV.

"QUI A OFFENSÉ NE PARDONNE JAMAIS."

"Curse him! When he lay in that garret dying, who could dream he would ever rise again, unless it were to go to a madhouse?" mused Trevenna before the fire in his dressing-room in the palace

He had been slightly bruised, but not hurt; and he had told the court party, whom he had found and rejoined as soon as he had called his horse to him, that an oak-bough had struck and blinded him, so that he had fallen out of his saddle. As he sat now, smoking, with his costly velvets wrapped around him, with all the elegance and luxury of a palace in the suite of chambers allotted him as an English minister and a guest of the first circle of autumn visitors, there were something of irritation and impatience even amidst his triumphant reflections. He could not resent the force used to him, for he was too wise to let the world know of that forest-meeting; and he hated to think that his intricate nets had had a single loose mesh, by which his prey had escaped the ruin of mind and body that he had made sure would accompany the ruin of peace and pride and fair fortune; he hated to think that while Chandos lived there would live one who knew him as he was, knew what he had been, knew the treacheries by which his rise had been consummated, knew the stains that darkened the gloss and the symmetry of the splendid superstructure of his success.

They had never met until now; and he hated to feel that the sting of his victim's scorn had power to pierce him; he hated to feel that a ruined exile could quote against him the time when he —the millionaire, the minister, the court guest, the national favourite —had been a debtor in gaming-prisons, an adventurer without a sou.

"And yet I don't know," he mused on, while a smile came about his mouth, and he gave a kick to the ruddy embers of the fire. "I'm not sorry he lives, either: if he were dead he wouldn't suffer, and if he were dead he wouldn't see *me* rise! No! I like him to live. He'd have missed all the bitterness of it if he'd gone in his grave then. How I sting him with every step I get! How his heart burns when he reads my name in the Cabinet! How it must wring and goad and taunt and madden him when he knows I'm in his palaces, and have got his prosperity, and have won my way to the proudest position a man can hold in England. No! I'm glad he lives. Gad! I'll ask him to Clarencieux, one day."

And he laughed to himself. This was part and parcel of the man's jovial malicious, farcical, racy temper; and the sweetest morsel in all his triumphs was that each step and each crown of them was—a revenge.

"Mercy! what a fool he's been!" he thought. "Cared for nothing, while he had the power, but pleasure and revelry, and making love to women, and playing Lorenzo the Magnificent, and now solaces himself in his poverty with turning metaphysical questions inside out, and *brodant sur la toile d'araignée*, as they say here, and caring for the future of the world, and working out the scientific laws of history! Mercy! as if it mattered to *us* whether the world goes smash when we've no more to do with it! However, I don't understand him; never did. A man who could care so little for money as he did never could be quite sane. Even now he's such a fool; he's never said to me the one thing he might say,—that I was his debtor."

To dream that there might be a generosity too proud to quote past services against a present traitor utterly escaped Trevenna: he was far too practical to have glimpse of such a temper; he only thought the man a fool, a wonderful fool, who forbore to taunt him, with the stone that lay so ready to his hand, in the reproach, "I served you."

"No; I'm glad he lives. It would be Hamlet with the part of Hamlet left out, if he didn't exist to watch *my* triumph!" he mused. Clenching the matter in his own mind, and getting up to summon his valet and dress for dinner. His momentary bitterness was all gone. Here he was, the guest of a sovereign, with a name that had fame in the Old and New Worlds, riches as much as he needed them, a future brilliant as his present, an ambition without limit, and a station that enemies and friends alike must envy. He was content, very richly content, as he sauntered down to join the Palace circle, distinguished as the most eloquent, the most penetrating, the most liberal, and the most promising statesman of the English Cabinet, his opinion sought by princes and diplomatists, his words heard as words of gold breathed from the lips of one who would probably govern in the highest rank of all in the future, his views studied with interest, as those of the favourite of a great people, even his mere badinage graciously sought by *grandes dames* who once denied him cards to their receptions. The high orders detested him still, it is true; but they feared him, and they courted him. They thought they propitiated him by such concessions. Never was error wider. He used them, and—despised them.

"M. Trevenna, permit me congratulations on your late magnificent coup d'état," smiled the Comtesse de la Vivarol, who, under a new dynasty, reigned in the court, a power now, as she had earlier been a beauty.

He bowed his thanks.

"You do me much honour, madame. I trust we have the aid of your favouring sympathies?"

"Personally, yes; scarcely your party. You are all so decorous and so dull in your Parliament. Whoever turns the handle, the organ plays the same tunes."

"And you would like an infusion of the *ça ira?* Well, I should not object to it myself; but I shouldn't dare to introduce it. I'm very prudent!"

"Indeed! You go rather far, too, at Darshampton——"

Trevenna shook his head.

"Darshampton! They will tell you there that I am devoted to the civil and religious institutions of the nation. Why, I have built a church! It cost me a deal in painted windows; but you don't know what it has done for me in reputation. It's made two spiritual lords believe in me, and given me *postiche* as a 'safe man' in perpetuity. Really, for a good public effect, I think nothing is better than a church. Men think you have such a thorough conviction of orthodox truth, if you adore the Lord in stucco and oak-carving!"

La Vivarol laughed.

"You were not so orthodox once?"

"No; but I am now. I go to church every Sunday,—specially when I'm down at Darshampton. To be unorthodox is like walking out on a midsummer day in your shirt-sleeves. It's refreshing to take your coat off, and it's very silly to carry a lot of sheep's wool that you pant under; but all the same, no man who cares what his neighbours say walks abroad in his waistcoat. Orthodoxy and broadcloth are fallacies *à la mode:* if you air yourself in heresy and a blouse, the parsons and tailors, who see their trades in danger, will get a writ of lunacy out against you."

"You are a clever man, M. Trevenna! You know how to manage your world. But does it *never* tire you, that incessant promenade in such unimpeachable broadcloth?"

Trevenna met her eyes with a gleaming mischief in his own. He attempted no concealment with her; the keen wit of the aristocratic politician would, he knew, have pierced it in an instant; and she, who had once bidden him *apprendre à s'effacer*, alone never let him forget that she had known him when he was on sufferance and obscure.

"Tire?" he said now; "no, never! Who tires on the stage, so long as they clap him, and so long as it pays? It is your dissatisfied, unappreciated men that may tire of their *soupe maigre;* nobody tires of the turtle-soup of success."

"Then you don't believe in surfeits?"

"Not for strong digestions."

"Perhaps you are right; and there is no absinthe that produces incessant appetite so well as intense self-love."

Trevenna laughed good-humouredly; he acknowledged the implication.

"Ah, madame, you know I never denied that I was selfish. Why should I? If one don't love one's self, who will? And, I confess, I like present success. Immortality is terribly dull work, a hideous statue, that gets black as soot in no time; funeral sermons that make you out a Vial of Revelation, and discuss the probabilities of your being in the regions of Satan; a bust that slants you off at the shoulders, trims you round with a stone scallop, and sticks you up on a bracket; a tombstone for the canes of the curious to poke at; an occasional attention in the way of withered immortelles or biographical Billingsgate, and a partial preservation shared in common with mummies, auks' eggs, snakes in bottles, and deformities in spirits of wine—*that's* posthumous fame. I must say I don't see much fun in it."

The Comtesse smiled a gracious amusement over her fan.

"You have different views from your old friend."

"Who? Chandos? Poor fellow! he was always eccentric, lived in the empyrean, and had ideas that may be practicable in the millennium, but certainly won't be so before. 'Great wits to madness,' &c. After having squandered all that made life endurable, he consoles himself, I believe with the belief that people will read him when he's dead. What a queer consolation! Stendahl thought the same thing: who opens his books now?"

"Though you despise immortality, M. Trevenna, it seems you can still grudge it," said La Vivarol, with that quick, penetrative wit which could be barbed as an arrow.

Trevenna felt angry with himself for having been trapped into the words.

"I grudge him nothing, madame," he laughed, good-humouredly, "least of all a mummy-like embalming by posterity's bibliomaniacs. Indeed, now I am come in office, I shall try and induce him to accept something more substantial. I believe he's as poor as Job, though he's still as proud as Lucifer."

"He had somewhat of Job's fortune in his friends," said the Comtesse, with a smile, as she turned to others.

"What does she still feel for him?—love, or hate? I can understand most things," thought Trevenna, "but hang me if I can ever understand love,—past or present. It's a Jack-in-the-box, always jumping up when you think it's screwed down. It's like dandelion-seeds for lightness, blowing away with a breath, and yet it's like nettles for obstinacy; there's no knowing when it's plucked up. A confounded thing, certainly."

Like a wise man, he had taken care to have nothing to do with the confounded thing, and, in consequence, digested all his dinners, and never muddled any of his affairs.

CHAPTER V.

"NE CHERCHER QU'UN REGARD, QU'UNE FLEUR, QU'UN SOLEIL."

In the deep gloom of an antique, forsaken, world-forgotten town of Italy, silent, grass-grown, unspeakably desolate, with the brown shadows of its ancient houses, and here and there the noiseless gliding form of monk or nun flitting across the deserted spaces, a head, like a Guido Aurora in its youth, like a Guido Magdalen in its sadness, leaned out from the archway of a bridge-parapet, with the fair warmth of the cheek and the chestnut light of the hair lying wearily on the pillow of the rough-hewn stone. Fallen so, half unconsciously, to rest, the girl's form leaned against the buttress of the old river-way that spanned tawny shallow waters only traversed by some olive-laden canal-boat, whose striped sails flapped lazily in the sun; her brow was sunk on her hand; her eyes, full of a passionate pain, watched the monotonous ebb and flow of the stream; her whole figure expressed an intense fatigue; but on her face, with all its brooding, tired suffering, there was a look of patient and unalterable resolve.

"So endless!—so endless!" she murmured to the silence of the waters. "Surely God will have pity soon!"

There was only, in answer, the changeless, sullen ripple of the river far below,—the silence that seems so bitter to those who suffer in their youth, and who think some Divine voice will surely

whisper consolation,—the silence eternal, in which later they find man must live and must die.

A bent, browned, weather-worn fruit-seller, with a burden of melons and gourds and figs fresh from the tree, traversing the steep incline of the bridge, paused and looked at her. She was very poor, and she was old; but she had a tender soul under a rough rind. She touched the girl's fever-flushed cheek with the cool fragrance of a bough of syringa, and spoke very gently in her broad, mellow peasant-dialect:—

"*Poverina*, thou art tired. Take some fruit."

She started, and looked up; but there was almost apathy in the smile with which she shook her head,—it was so listless in its melancholy.

"You are very kind; but I want nothing."

"That is not true," said the old contadina. "Thou art in want of much; thou art too weary for thy youth. Where are thy friends?"

"I have none!"

"None? Mother of God! and so young! Thou art seeking some one?"

A deep flush passed over her face; she bent her head in assent.

"Ah! thou seekest those who love thee?"

"No," she said, simply. "I only seek to find one; and when I have found him, and heard his voice once more—to die."

She spoke rather to her own thoughts than to the peasant. The old woman's deep-set eyes grew very gentle, and her lips muttered, in wrath,

"Che—e—e! Is it so with thee? and so young! The Madonna's vengeance fall on him, then, whoever he be, for having caused thee such early shame!"

The words acted like a spell; she lifted herself from the drooping languor of her rest, and flashed on the peasant from the superb darkness of her eyes an imperious challenge of rebuke and amaze. Who the speaker was she forgot; she only remembered the sense that had been spoken,

"Shame? *I* have no shame! My only glory is to have seen and known the noblest life on earth. The only hope I live for is that I may be worthy to hear his words once more. Vengeance on *him*? God's love be with him always!"

She passed onward with a sovereign's grace, moving like one in a dream; though the passion of her words had risen to so sudden and vivid a defence, she seemed to have little consciousness of what she did, whither she went. Then, as though a pang of self-reproach moved her, she turned swiftly and came back, and stooped over the aged contadina, raising the fallen fruit with a self-accusative gentleness, beseeching even while it still was so proud.

"Forgive me! You meant kindness; and you did not know. I was ungrateful and ungentle; but I am very tired."

Her lashes were heavy with tears, and a sigh of intense exhaustion escaped her. The peasant, touched to the quick, forced the freshest fruits into her hands.

"I thought nothing of it. I only pitied thee."

"Pity is for those who ask alms, or stoop to shame: do not give it to me."

"But art thou all alone?"

"Yes; all alone."

"Christ! and with thy beauty! Ah! insult will come to thee, though thou art like a princess in exile; insult will come, if thou art alone in the wide world with such a face and such a form as thine."

On her face arose a look of endurance and of resistance far beyond her years.

"Insult never comes except to those who welcome it. Farewell and believe me from my heart grateful, if I have seemed not to be so enough."

And she went on her way, with the mellow light of a setting sun on her meditative brow, and the shadow of the grey parapet cast forward on her path. The fruit-seller looked after her wistfully, perplexed and regretful.

"The saints keep her!" she muttered over her tawny gourds and luscious figs. "She will need their care bad enough before she has found out what the world is for such as she. Holy Mary! whoever left her alone like that must have had a heart of stone."

The girl passed onward over the rise and descent of the old pointed bridge; there was the flush of fever on her cheek, the exhaustion of bodily fatigue in her step; but her eyes looked far forward with a brave light, resolute while it was so visionary, and her lips had as much of resolve as of pain on them. In one hand swung a pannier full of late summer flowers, woven with coils of scarlet creepers, and with the broad bronzed leaves of vine, in such taste as only the love and the fancy of an artist-mind could weave them; in the other she held, closely clasped, the bough of blossoming syringa and a book well worn, that she pressed against her bosom as she went, as though it were some living and beloved thing. There was an extreme pathos, such as had touched the peasant woman, in the union of her excessive youth and her perfect loneliness; there was something yet higher and yet more pathetic in the blending in her of the faith and ignorance of childhood that wanders out into the width of the world as into some wonder-land of Faëry, and the unwearying, undaunted resolution of a pilgrim who goes forth as the pilgrims of Christendom went eastward to look on their Jerusalem once, and die content.

The bridge led down across the river into a wide square, so still, so deserted, so mediæval, with its vast, abandoned palaces, and its marvellous church beauty, with only some friar's shadow or some heavily-weighted mule crossing it in the light of the Italian sunset. In the low loggia of one of the palaces, altered to a posting-house, a group was standing, idly looking at the grass-grown waste, whilst their horses were changing. They were a gay, rich, titled set of indolent voyagers who were travelling to Rome from Paris. They saw her as she came beneath the balcony, with the book against

her bosom, and the abundance of the flowers drooping downward in rings and wreaths of colour as she bore them. Murmurs of admiration at her loveliness broke irresistibly even from the world-sated men and women who leaned there, tired and impatient of even a few minutes' dulness.

"The old traditions of Italia, the ideal of Titian himself!" said one of them. "*Bellissima*, will you not spare us one of your lilies?"

She paused, and glanced at the women of the group.

"Those ladies can have them, if they wish."

"But must not I, my exquisite young flower-priestess?" laughed her first questioner.

She let her grave luminous eyes dwell calmly on him.

"No, signore."

One of the women leaned down, amused at her companion's rebuff and mortification; the loggia was so low that she could touch the flowers, and she drew out one of the clusters of late lilies.

"My fair child, do you sell these?"

"I have done, signora."

"Then you will sell them to me," said the other, as she dropped into the basket a little gold piece and took up the blossoms. A hand as soft as her own put back the money into her palm.

"I have sold them for what they are worth—a few scudi; I give them to you gladly, and I do not take alms from any."

They looked at her in wonder; the dignity of her utterance, the purity of her accent, the royal ease in her attitude, amazed them. An Italian child, selling flowers for her bread, spoke with the decision and the serenity of a princess.

"But you will let me offer it you as a gift, will you not?"

She shook her head.

"Would you take gold as a gift yourself, signora?"

The great lady reddened ever so slightly; the words spoken in all simplicity pricked her. It was rumoured by her world that empires and governments had on occasion bought her silence or her alliance by magnificent bribes.

"*Pardieu*, my loveliest living Titian!" lauged the French Marquis who had first addressed her, "Madame la Comtesse does not sell flowers in the street, I fancy."

Her eyes swept over him with a tranquil, meditative disdain.

"There is but one rule for honour," she said, briefly; "and rank gives no title for insolence."

"Fairly hit!" laughed the great lady, who had recovered her momentary irritation. "My beautiful child, will you tell me your name, at the least?"

"It is Castalia."

Where she stood before the loggia, with a troubled seriousness in the gaze of her brilliant eyes (for the tone of the Marquis had roused more anger than his mere words), her hand moved the book against her heart. "If I were to ask these?" she mused. "It is only the nobles who will ever tell me; it is only they who

can be his friends. I have never found courage to speak of him yet; but, until I do, I cannot know."

"Castalia!" echoed the aristocrat. "A fair name, indeed,—as fair as you and your flowers. You will not let me repay you for your lilies: is there nothing you can let me do for you?"

Castalia looked at her musingly; the words were gentle, but there was something that failed to reassure her. She stood before the half-insolent admiration of the men, the supercilious admiration of the women, of this titled and aristocratic group, with as complete a dignity and indifference as though she were a young patrician who received them; but she felt no instinct of regard or of trust to any one of them. Still she drew nearer the loggia, and held out the book reluctantly to her questioner; her eyes filled with an earnest, terrible, longing wistfulness; the words were only wrenched out with a great pang.

"Signora, yes: can you tell me where *he* is?"

Her hand pointed to the name on the title-page, and her voice shook with the intensity of anxious entreaty over the last two words.

The Countess glanced at the volume, then let it fall with amaze, as she gazed at the pleading, aching eyes that looked up to hers.

"Chandos! *Mon Dieu!* what is it to you?"

"You know him?" There was the tremulous thirstiness of long-deferred, long-despairing hope in the question, but there was also something of the passionate jealousy of love.

The aristocrat looked at her with searching, surprised, insolent eyes, in which some anger and more irony glittered, while she turned over the leaves of the book.

"It is 'Lucrèce!'" she murmured,—"'Lucrèce!'" In the moment her thoughts went backward over so many years to so many buried hours, to so many forgotten things, to so many bygone scenes. The book came to her like a voice of the past.

"You know him!"

"What interest has he for you?"

The lady had recovered her momentary amazement, and the smile with which she spoke thrilled with fire and struck like ice the heart of Castalia, though that heart was too guileless to know all the smile meant. But the anguish of a hopeless and endless search was stronger on her than the sense of insult; her eyes filled with a beseeching misery, like a wounded animal's, and her hands, as she drew back the volume, were crushed on it in a gesture of agonised supplication.

"You know his name, at least? Ah! tell me, for the love of pity, where he is gone!"

The aristocrat turned away with a negligent cold contempt.

"Your friend wanders all over the world; if you want to discover him, you have a very poor chance, and one I am scarcely disposed to aid."

"Chandos, now he has turned philosopher, retains pretty much the same tastes he had as a poet, I suppose?" she murmured, with a smile, to one of her female friends. "The girl is very beautiful

certainly; but how shameless to ask *us!* It is scarcely creditable to an author who writes such eloquent periods on Humanity to leave her to starve by selling lilies!"

The slight, scornful laugh caught Castalia's ear, as the cold words of the first phrases had stung all her pride and killed all hope within her; a great darkness had come over her face; but her face was white and set, and her lips were pressed together to hold in the words that rose to them. She turned away without another entreaty; not even to learn of him would she supplicate there. The Marquis, with a light leap, cleared the loggia and gained her side. He was young, handsome; and his voice, when he would, was sweet as music.

"You seek the writer of that book?"

The look she turned on him might have touched the sternest to pity.

"Ah, signore,—yes!"

The answer broke from her with a sigh that was beyond repression. Her eyes grew dim with tears. The world held but one idea, one thought, one existence, for her, and her love was at once too utter an absorption and too absolute an adoration to be conscious of anything except its one search.

"Come with me, then, and I will tell you what you wish."

A radiance of joy and hope flashed over the sadness of her face. She did not know how dangerous an intensity that sudden light of rapture lent her beauty; she only thought that she should hear of him.

"I will come," she said softly, while her hand still held the book to her bosom; and she went, unresisting, beside him to the place to which he turned,—a solitary, darkened terrace, heavily overhung by the stones of an unused palazzo, with the river flowing sluggishly below.

"Why do you want to seek him?" her companion asked.

In his heart he thought he knew well enough. Her lover had abandoned her, and she was following him to obtain redress or maintenance.

Her eyes dwelt on the water with the earnest, lustrous, dreamy gaze that had used to recall so vague a memory to Chandos.

"Signore, only to see him once more."

"To see him! To stir him to pity, I suppose,—to make some claim on him?"

She did not comprehend his meaning; but she lifted her head quickly with the imperial pride that mingled in so witching a contrast with her guileless and childlike simplicity.

"Signore, I would die sooner than ask his pity; it would be to ask and to merit his scorn. Claim, too! What claim? Have subjects a claim on their king, because he has once been gentle enough to smile on them? When I find him, I will not weary him; I will not let him even know that I am near; but I will search the world through till I look on his face once more, and then—the joy of it will kill me, and I shall be at rest with my mother for ever."

He looked at her, mute with surprise. If she had been attractive

in his sight before, she was tenfold more so now, as she spoke with the exaltation of a love that absorbed her whole life, making her unconscious of all save itself, and the mournful simplicity of the last words uttered with a resignation that was content, in the dawn of her youth, to receive no other mercy than death. He was amazed, he was bewildered, he was entranced; he felt an envious passion in an instant against the one for whom she could speak thus; but comprehend her he could not. He was shallow, selfish, a cold libertine, and at once too young and too worldly to even faintly understand the mingling in her nature of transparency and depth, of tropical fervour and of utter innocence, of fearless pride against all insult, and of absolute abandonment to one idolatry. He spoke in the irritation of wonder and annoyance.

"The author of 'Lucrèce' is much flattered to be the inspirer of so tender a love! I am afraid he has been but negligent of the gift."

The words were coarser than he would have used save on the spur of such irritation; their effect was like a spell. The flush that was like the scarlet depth of a crimson camellia covered her face in an instant, her eyes darkened with a tremulous emotion that swiftly altered to the blaze of wrath, her lips trembled, her whole form changed under the sudden change of thought; the shame of love came to her for the first moment, as the lips of another man spoke it; she had been wholly unconscious of it before. She was seeking him as devotees sought the Holy Grail, as a stray bird seeks the only hand that has ever caressed and sheltered it. The word or the meaning of passion had never been uttered to her till now. An intense horror consumed her,—horror of herself, horror of her companion; she shuddered where she stood in the hot air, but the proud instinct of her nature rose to sustain herself, to defend Chandos.

"You mistake, signore," she said, with a calm that for the moment awed him. "He whom I seek, I seek because he is my only friend,—my only sovereign lord; because my debt to him is a debt so vast, a debt of life itself that life can never pay. He was never negligent of me,—never; he was but too good, too generous, too gentle."

He looked at her, perplexed and incensed. He vaguely felt that he was in error; but he was distant as ever from the truth. All he knew was that he had never, in the whole range of courts, seen loveliness that could compete with the face and form of this young seller of the Tuscan lilies.

"Forgive me," he murmured, eagerly; "I meant no offence. Only to look on you is sufficient to——"

"You said you would tell me where he is." She spoke very low, but her lips were set. She began to mistrust him.

"I will; but hear me first. He whom you talk of is very poor; he is no longer young; he is a madman who spent all his millions in a day, and who always played at his fancy with women, and left them. He is not worthy a thought of yours."

The glorious darkness of her eyes grew like fire; but she held her passion in reir

" Keep the promise you made me," she said, in her teeth. " Tell me of him."

" I will. One moment more. He cannot care whether you live or die, or would he have left you thus?"

It was a random blow, essayed at hazard, but it struck home. She grew very pale, and her lips shook; yet she was resolute,—resolute in her proud defence and self-restraint.

" Signore, there was no cause why he should care. I was but as a broken bird that he was gentle to; he had a right to leave me,—no right to think of me one hour."

He repressed an impatient oath. He could not understand her, yet he felt he made no head against this resignation of herself to neglect and to oblivion; and the splendour of her face seemed a hundred times greater because of this impotence to make any impress on her thoughts.

" At least, if he had had the heart of a man, he could never have forsaken or forgotten you," he urged, tenderly. " Listen. I, who have seen you but a moment ago, give you too true a homage to be able to quit your side until you deal me my fiat of exile. In the world there—the world of which perhaps you know nothing—I have riches and honours, and pleasures and palaces, that shall all be yours if you will have them. Come with me, and no queen shall equal your sway. Come with me, and for all those lilies I will give you as many pearls. Come with me; you shall have diamonds in your hair, and slaves for your every wish, and I the chiefest yet the humblest of them all; you shall have kings at your feet, and make the whole world mad with one glance of those divine eyes. Come with me. *He* never offered you what I offer you now, if you will only trust to my truth and my love."

He spoke with all the hyperbole that he thought would best dazzle and entrance one to whom the beauties and the wealth of the world alike were unknown,—one in whom he saw blent the pride of patricians with the poverty of peasants,—spoke with his eyes looking eloquent tenderness, with the sun on his handsome head, with the mellow, beguiling music in his voice. For all answer where she stood, her eyes dilated with abhorrent scorn and slumbering fire; she shuddered from him as from some asp. She did not comprehend all to which he wooed her, all that he meant to convey; but she comprehended enough to know that he sought to bribe her with costly promises, and outraged her with a familiarity offensive beyond endurance.

" No!" she said, passionately, while the liquid melody of her voice rang clear and imperious,—" no! he never offered me what you offer me,—insult. Neither was he ever what you are,—a traitor to his word!"

She turned from him with that single answer, the blood hot as flame in her cheek, her head borne with careless, haughty dignity. She would not show him all she felt; she would not show him that her heart seemed breaking,—breaking with the bitterness of disappointment, with the sudden vivid sense of ineradicable shame, with the absolute desolation that came on her with the

first faint sickening perception of the meaning and the tempting of evil.

Mortified, irritated, incensed at defeat where he had looked for easy victory and grateful welcome, the young noble caught her as she turned, flung his arms about her ere she could stir, and stooped his lips to hers.

"*Bellissima!* do you think I shall lose you like that?"

Before his kiss could touch her, she had wrenched herself free, flung him off, and struck him across the mouth with the bough of syringa. The blow of the fragrant white blossoms stamped him coward more utterly than a weightier stigma could have stamped it.

Then she broke the branch in two, threw it at his feet as a young empress might break the sword of a traitor, and, leaving all her lilies and wealth of leafage scattered there, she quitted him without a word.

Bold though he was, her pursuer dared not follow her. She looked down at the water, as she went along its sullen course, with a smile, and leaned her lips on the book's worn page.

"*He* touched them once," she thought; "no other ever should while that river could give me death!"

A deadly horror, a tumult of dread and of loathing, were on her. She never rested, all tired though she was, till she was far out of the town, and amidst the vine-fields, whose leaves were bronzed, and whose purple and amber clusters were swelling with their richest bloom, near the vintage. The shadows, and the stone wilderness, and the contracted air and space of cities, were terrible to her; mountain-winds and forest-fragrance and the free stretch of limitless vision had been as the very breath of life to her from her infancy; caged in the darkness and the heat of cities, she would have died as surely as a caged mocking-bird dies of longing for the south. She dropped to rest, still by the side of the water under the shade of the vines, while the buildings and bridges of the town sank down behind a cypress-crowned crest of hills, grey with olives, or bare where the maize had been reaped. The browned leaves and the reddened fruit hung over her; the water-flags and the purling stream, narrowed and shallow here, were at her feet; alone, the great tears rushed into her eyes, and her scarce-flown childhood conquered.

"Oh, God! the width of the world!" she murmured, while one sob rose in her throat,—it seemed so vast, so endless, so naked, and so pathless a desert. This was the world to which she had used to look as the redresser of her wrongs, the battle-field of her victories, the fairy-realm of every beauty, the giver of such golden crowns, such hours of paradise!—this world that seemed so full of lives rushing to their tombs, wherein no man cared for his brother,—where all was hard, and heated, and choked, and pitiless, and none paused to think of God!—this world in which there was but one life for her, and that one lost,—perhaps lost for ever.

This boundless width of the world!—to wander through it, ever seeking, never finding, wearing the years away in fruitless search, pursuing what, like the mountain-heights, receded farther with

every nearer step, looking in all the multitudes of earth for one face, one regard, one smile! The burden lay heavy on her young heart, and the heart-sickness of toil without end was on her to despair. But the nature in her was brave unto death, and the veneration she bore her one idol enchained and possessed her whole existence. She had a child's faith, a woman's passion, a martyr's heroism.

She looked up at the sunlight through the mist of her tears; and trust was strong in her, strong as the anguish that made her fair lips white and hot in its pain and her brief life seem near its ending.

"He is poor,—he has suffered," she mused, recalling the words that had been spoken against him. "He is so great; but he has lost his kingdom. When I find him, then, there may be some way I may serve him,—some way as slaves serve."

To hear that he had want and sorrow had seemed to bring him nearer to her, had bound her heart closer yet to one who was not less a sovereign to her because a sovereign discrowned. She marvelled what his history could be. All of glory, of dignity, of sacrifice, of desolation, that wronged greatness bears, thronged to her thoughts as the story of his life. She knew him now as the unknown man of whom she had said, on the faith of his written words, that he would have gathered strength from any fall; and she knew no more than this. It was enough; it spoke more to her than if she had been told of empires that he owned. She knew the kingdom of his thoughts, the treasuries of his mind; through his words he had spoken to her long ere her eyes had rested on him, and she had revered him as her master ere ever she had heard his voice, as Héloïse had revered the genius which roused the nations and shook the churches, ere ever Abelard had stood before her.

It bound her to him in a submission absolute and proud in its own bondage as was ever that of Héloïse.

It mattered nothing to her what his life had been,—a reign or a martyrdom, a victory or a travail; what *he* was was known to her, and she asked no more. Yet, where she leaned alone, the colour glowed into her face; she shrank and trembled in the solitude as though a thousand eyes were on her; for the first time the sense of shame had touched her, for the first time the vileness of evil had approached her, and both left her afraid and startled.

"They spoke as though it were sin to seek him," she thought. "Will he be angered if I ever find him? I will never go near him, never ask his pity, never let him know that I am by; I will only look on him from some distance, only stay where I can hear his voice afar off—if I live. But whenever I see him the joy will kill me; and better so,—better far than to risk one cold word from him, one look of scorn. He said the world would crush me, and stone me like Hypatia. The world shall not; but one glance of his would, if it ever rebuked me!"

A shiver ran through her as she mused.

She had cast herself on the desert of the world in darkness, as the lamps of sacrifice are cast on the stream by Indian women at

night. All was strange to her, all cold, all arid, all without track or knowledge or light. The beauty of her voice in choral service and the flowers that she gathered from forest or river were all her riches, and hand to guide her she had none. But all fear for herself, all thought for herself, were banished in the domination of one supreme grief, one supreme hope. The world was so wide! When would she find him?

Her tears fell heavy and fast, down into the white cups of the faded lilies at her feet. The world was so wide, and she was so lonely,—she whose heart ached for love, whose eyes ached for beauty, whose youth longed for happiness, as the hart for the water-springs.

CHAPTER VI.

"NIHIL HUMANI A ME ALIENUM PUTO."

"If you would but come back to us!" Philippe d'Orvâle spoke softly, as a woman speaks in tenderness. He stood on the hearth of his great banqueting-room, rich and dark in its burnished lustre of gold and scarlet, like an old palace-chamber of Venice; his hair, that silky lion's mane, was white, but under it his brown eyes flashed, full of untamed fire, and from the depths of the luxuriant snowy beard laughter fit for Olympus would still shake the silence with the ringing, riotous mirth of yore. Now those eyes were grave with a wistful shadow, and the voice of the reckless Prince Bohemian had a silver gentleness. "If you would but come back to us!" he said, again, as he had said it many times through the length of weary years. "The people hunger for you. They bear patiently with me, but it is in bitterness; they have never been reconciled to my rule, though its yoke is light. Come back! It is unchanged; it will be as your own: it *should be* your own at one word, if you would but let me!"

Where Chandos stood, in the shadow of the jutting angle of the alabaster sculpture above the hearth, a shiver shook him that he could not restrain, like that which strong limbs give irrepressibly when a bared nerve is cut and wrung. His own voice was very low, as he answered,—

"To thank you were impossible; I have found no words for it through seventeen years. Your friendship may well avail to outweigh a whole world's faithlessness. But to accept were to sink myself lower in my own sight than my worst ruin ever sank me. *Were* I to go back on another's bounty, I would give the men who still remember me leave to stone me as I went, and curse me in my father's name."

Philippe d'Orvâle's superb head drooped in silence: the proud noble knew the temper that denied him, and honoured it, and could not dare to press it to surrender,—knew that denial to him was right and just, even whilst his heart longed most to wring assent

That denial had been given him steadily through the long course of seventeen years,—given by one who had once never known what it was to forbid a desire or control a wish,—by one to whom exile was the ceaseless and deadly bitterness that it was to Dante,—by one who longed for the mere sight of the forest-lands, the mere breath of the forest-winds, of the birthright he had lost, as the weary eyes of the Syrian Chief longed for a sight of the Promised Land, that he had to lie down and die without entering, banned out to the last hour.

Chandos saw the pain on him, and stretched out his hand.

"My best friend, if I could take such charity from any, it should be from you. But you must feel with me that to give consent to what you wish were to lose the one relic of my race I have striven to keep,—its barren honour."

"I know! I know! Yet all I ask is leave to give a sovereign back his throne. No more than my house did to my cousin of Bourbon."

"And the sovereign who bartered his kingdom for ten years' mad delight had but justice done him when it was swept away for ever. But speak no more of it for God's sake! I am weak as water, *here!*"

"Weak! and yet you refuse?"

"I refuse, because to accept were disgrace; but there are times when I could wish still that—bearing me the love you did—you had shot me like a dog, while I could have died in my youth!"

The words were hushed to a scarce-heard whisper, as they escaped through his set teeth; they were a truth rarely wrung from him,—the truth that through the patience and the peace and the strength he had forced from calamity, through the silence in which he had borne his doom and the high ambition which guided and sustained him, the old passionate agony, the old loathing of life that was pain, would break with a resistless force, and make him long to have died in that golden and cloudless light of his lost years,—died ere its suns had set for ever.

"Weak! That is rather strength, since, wishing this thus, you still have borne against it, and lived on, and conquered!"

"I have no strength! A foe's taunt can make a brute of me, a friend's tenderness unnerve me like a woman. Sometimes I think I have learned nothing; sometimes I think that no reed was ever frailer than I. A while ago a young girl showed me 'Lucrèce:' I know, as I saw the book, what Swift felt when he shed those passionate tears for the genius he had in his youth!"

"Yours is greater than in your youth."

"Ah! I doubt it, Youth is genius; it makes every dawn a new world, every woman's beauty a love-ode, every breath a delight. We weave philosophies as life slips from us; but when we were young our mere life was a poem."

Dark hours came on him oftentimes; the Hellenic nature in him, that loved beauty and harmony and the soft lulling of the senses, could not perish, and, imprisoned in the loneliness and colourless asceticism of need and of exile, ached in him and beat

the bars of its prison-house in many a moment. He had subdued his neck to the yoke, and he had found his redemption in sublimer things and loftier freedoms, as Boethius under the chains of the Goth found his in the golden pages of the "Consolations;" but there were times when the Greek-like temper in him still turned from life without enjoyment, as from life without value.

The heart of Philippe d'Orvâle went with him. The careless, royal, headlong levity of the princely Bohemian had made of life one long unthinking revel. Dynasties and creeds and nations and thrones might rock and fall, might rise and totter, round him; he heeded them never, but drank the purple wine of his life brimming and rose-crowned, and learned his science from women's eyes, and sung a Bacchic chaunt while others grew grey in the gall of state harness, and shook the grand, mellow, rolling laughter from his colossal chest at the vain toil of the heart-burning world around him while he held on his gay, endless, Viking-like wassail. Of a truth there are creeds far less frank and less wise than his; and of a truth there are souls far less honest and bold and bright. He would have lost life rather than have broken his word; and no lie had ever stained his fearless, careless, laughter-warmed lips. Of a truth the mad Duke had virtues the world has not.

His eyes dwelt now with a great unspoken tenderness on Chandos.

"Yet you are greater than you were then," he said, slowly. "I know it,—I who am but a wine-cup rioter and love nothing but my summer-day fooling. You are greater; but the harvest you sow will only be reaped over your grave."

"I should be content could I believe it would be reaped then."

"Be content, then. You may be so."

"God knows! Do you not think Marsy and Delisle de Sales and Linguet believed, as they suffered in their dungeons for mere truth of speech, that the remembrance of future generations would solace them? Bichât gave himself to premature death for science' sake: does the world once in a year speak his name? Yet how near those men are to us, to be forgotten! A century, and history will scarce chronicle them."

"Then why give the wealth of your intellect to men?"

"Are there not higher things than present reward and the mere talk of tongues? The *monstrari digito* were scarce a lofty goal. We may love Truth and strive to serve her, disregarding what she brings us. Those who need a bribe from her are not her true believers."

Philippe d'Orvâle tossed his silvery hair from his eyes,—eyes of such sunny lustre still.

"Ay! And those who held that sublime code of yours, that cleaving to truth for truth's sake, where are they? How have they fared in every climate and in every age? Stoned, crucified, burned, fettered, broken on the vast black granite mass of the blind multitude's brutality, of the priesthood's curse and craft!"

"True! Yet if through us, ever so slightly, the bondage of

the creeds' traditions be loosened from the lives they stifle, and those multitudes—so weary, so feverish, so much more to be pitied than condemned—become less blind, less brute, the sacrifice is not in vain,"

" In your sense, no. But the world reels back again into darkness as soon as a hand has lifted it for a while into light. Men hold themselves purified, civilised; a year of war,—and lust and bloodthirst rage untamed in all their barbarism; a taste of slaughter,—and they are wolves again! There was truth in the old feudal saying, 'Oignez vilain, il vous poindra; poignez vilain, il vous oindra.' Beat the multitudes you talk of with a despot's sword, and they will lick your feet; touch them with a Christ-like pity, and they will nail you to the cross."

There was terrible truth in the words: this man of princely blood, who disdained all sceptres and wanted nothing of the world, could look through and through it with his bold sunlit eyes, and see its rottenness to the core.

Chandos sighed as he heard.

" You are right,—only too right. Yet even while they crouch to the tyrant's sabre, how bitterly they need release! even while they crucify their teachers and their saviours, how little they know what they do! They may forsake themselves; but they should not be forsaken."

Philippe d'Orvâle looked on him with a light soft as women's tears in his eyes, and dashed his hand down on the alabaster.

" Chandos, you live twenty centuries too late. You would have been crowned in Athens, and throned in Asia. But here, as a saving grace, they will call you—'mad!'"

" Well, if they do? The title has its honours. It was hooted against Solon and Socrates."

At that moment they were no longer alone; a foreign minister entered the reception-room. Only at Philippe d'Orvâle's house in Paris was Chandos ever seen by any members of the circles which long ago had followed him as their leader. With the statesmen, the thinkers, the scholars of Europe he had association: but with the extravagant and aristocratic worlds where he had once reigned he had no fellowship; and the younger generation, who chiefly ruled them, had no remembrance and but little knowledge of what his career once had been in those splendid butterfly-frivolities, those Tyrian purples of a glittering reign. A Turkish lily, when all its pomp of colour and of blossom has been shaken down in the wind and withered, is not more rapidly forgotten than the royalty of a fashionable fame when once reverse has overtaken it.

But his name had power, though of a widely different sort; and its influence was great. Science saw in him its co-revolutionist against tradition; weary and isolated thinkers battling with the apathy or the antagonism of men found in him their companion and their chief; young and ardent minds came in eager gratitude to his leadership; the churches stoned, the scholars reverenced him; the peoples vaguely wondered at him, and told from mouth to mouth the strange vicissitudes of his life. From the deep,

silent heart of old Italian cities, where many of his years were passed, his words came to the nations, and pierced ears most dead and closed to him, and carried far their seed of freedom, which would sink in the soil of public thought, and bear full harvest only, as Philippe d'Orvâle had said, above his grave. Men knew that there was might in this man, who had risen from a voluptuary's delight to face destruction, and had forced out of adversity the gold of strength and of wisdom. They listened,—even those who cursed him because he spoke too widely truth. They listened, and they found that an infinite patience, an exhaustless toleration, a deep and passionless calm, had become the temper of his intellect and of his teaching. It was too pure, too high, too profound for them, and too wide in grasp; but they listened, and vaguely caught a loftier tincture, a more serene justice, from him.

The career which his youth had projected, in the splendid ideals of its faith and its desire, could have been possible only in the ages when the world was young, and the sceptre of a king could gather the countless hosts as with a shepherd's love into one fold, under the great Syrian stars,—when the life of a man could be as one long magnificence of Oriental day, with death itself but the setting of a cloudless sun, and the after-glow of fame a trail of light to nations East and West. The dreams of his youth had been impossible: yet one thing remained to him of them,—their loyalty to men and their forbearance with them. In one sense he was greater than his father had been: statesmen mould the actions of the Present, but thinkers form the minds of the Future. It is the vaster power of the two.

It was late when he left the Hôtel d'Orvâle. He had spent the hours with some of the most eminent statesmen of the continent. All men of mark heard his opinions with eagerness and with deference. When he had had the opportunity, he had never sought either rank or state power; now that his intellect was his only treasury, he never sought to purchase with it either riches or the revival of his lost dignities. They did not comprehend him; but the absolute absence of all personal ambition impressed them in one who, when his word was omnipotent, had never exercised it to obtain the place and the power which made up their own aims, and who now gave his years and his thoughts to the search of truth, unheeding what it brought him. They wondered that, with his fame, he endeavoured to attain no material rewards, no political influence: in that wonder they missed the whole key of his character. He had been too proud ever to be attracted by the vulgarities of social distinctions in the years when any could have been his for the asking; now the same temper remained with him. Then, as a careless voluptuary, he had smiled at and pitied those who wasted the golden days in the feverish pursuit of ephemeral renowns; now, as a great writer, he had the same marvel, the same contempt, for the minds which could stoop their mighty strength to seek a monarch's favour or a court's caprice, to gain a ribbon or to form a six-months' ministry. The strife and fret of party had little more dignity in his eyes than the buzzing and

pushing of bees to enter a honey-clogged hive. The hero of public life is a slave, and a slave who must wear the livery of conventional forms and expedient fallacies. Chandos loved freedom, absolute freedom: he could no more have lived without it than he could have lived without air.

He knew that it was well that there should be men who would harness themselves to the car of the nations, and think that they led history, while they were in truth only the driven pack-horses of human development or national decadence; but he would no more have gone in their shafts than an eagle will wind a windlass.

As he went now, through the lateness of the night, with the fragrance of the Luxembourg gardens on the air, his thoughts were grave and far away.

The stillness of the night—so late that the crowds had thinned, and there were but little noise and movement even in the greatest thoroughfares—brought back on his memory the nights in which he had lain dying for a draught of cold water in the dens of this brilliant city,—of the nights when, in infamy, and shame, and misery, he had sought to kill remembrance and existence in joyless vice and opiate slumbers, in orgies that he loathed, in drugged sleep that lulled his mind into an idiot's vacancy. That time was vague and unreal to him as the phantasms of fever to the man who awakes from them; but he never looked back to it without a shudder. His fall had been so vast, and the plank so frail that alone had arrested his headlong reel into a suicide's grave or a madman's darkness! All men had forsaken him then, save one,—his enemy,—forsaken him, though their hands were full of his gifts,—forsaken him, leaving him to die like a dog. But he had not in return or in revenge abandoned them: he knew the terrible truth of the "Qui vitia odit, homines odit," and he would not let hatred of their ingratitude dwell with him and turn him cynic, for he cleaved to them in tenderness still. Perhaps in this yet more than in all other efforts of his later life he kept true to the dreams of his youth,—this patience with which he loved men and believed in their redeeming excellence, even through all which might have bidden him, as his foe had once bidden him, "curse God and die!"

As he passed now through the richer and finer quarters towards a retired and little-frequented street where he had his temporary dwelling in the centre of Paris, he passed close by the gates of a ducal mansion. Before them stood, among a long line, a carriage handsomely appointed, with powdered servants and laced liveries; the gates were open, and the court was in a blaze from a hundred lamps, with lackeys in their laced liveries moving to and fro. An English minister was coming out to the equipage, with some light, costly furs thrown loosely over his full dress. They looked at each other in the gas-light: a moment was enough for recognition.

Trevenna waved his hand towards his carriage with a laughing smile.

"Ah, mon prince? *you* on foot? How times are changed! Get

in; pray do. I'm very forgiving, and I'll give you a lift for auld lang syne."

Chandos passed on,—without a word, without a sign,—as though he had not heard. Yet men have slain their foes, in hot blood and cold, for less than this mocker's baseness and outrage.

The petty jeer of the indignity was fouler than a wrong worthier of resentment. When the soldier of the guard spat in Charles Stuart's face, the insult was the worse because too ignominious for scorn, too low for revenge.

He went onward down into the solitude of the tortuous winding,—one of those streets in which bric à brac, and priceless china, and old pictures, and old treasures of every sort are heaped together in little, dark, unguarded windows, and are only told from the shadows by the shine of a diamond or the shape of a quaint vase forcing itself up from the dimness and the dust. There came feebly towards him in the gloom, the tall, bowed form of an old man, with white hair floating on his shoulders, and his hands feebly stretched before him in the wavering, uncertain movement of the blind. The figure was impressive, with its long, flowing, black garments, and its stern, antique, patriarch-like look so painfully in contrast with the extreme feebleness of excessive age and that plaintive, flickering movement of the hands.

"Oh, my God!" he was muttering, piteously, "where is he? where is he?"

The grief and appeal of the accent, the helplessness of the sightless action accompanying it, arrested Chandos. He paused, and touched the blind wanderer on the arm.

"Whom are you seeking? Can I help you?"

The old man stopped his slow swinging step, and caught the gentleness of the tone with the quickness to sound that compensates for the loss of sight in so many.

"I search for my dog, sir," he answered. "He is my only guide, and I have lost him."

"Lost him? How far from this?"

"Some way. He broke from me: children lured him, I think. He was very pretty, and the life he led with me was but dull. It is natural he should forsake me."

Chandos listened, struck by the accent: he had known what it was to have an animal the sole friend left.

"Dogs rarely forsake us. I should hope he will come back to you. You cannot find your way without him?"

The other shook his head silently,—a grand, majestic, saturnine old man, despite the decrepitude that had bowed his back, and the melancholy supplication in which his trembling hands were outstretched.

Chandos looked at him silently also; there was something in his look and in his manner which impressed him with their intense sadness. No memory revived in him, but compassion moved him.

"Tell me where you live: I will see you home," he said, presently. It was not in his nature to leave any one so aged to wander wretchedly and uncertainly in the darkness of the after-

midnight. Trevenna would have enjoyed stealing the dog away, and leading the harassed creature round and round in a circle by a thousand mystifications; but to Chandos there was something of positive pain in the sight of any human being stranded in the midst of that peopled city for sheer need of a hand stretched out to him. Men had been false to him; but he remained loyally true to them.

The blind man turned with an involuntary start of wonder and of gratitude.

"You are very good, sir! Will it not trouble you?"

"Far from it. Men must be very heartless if they could all leave you to need such a trifle as that."

"Men owe me nothing," said the other, curtly, whilst he went on to tell his residence.

Chandos said no more, but went thither, slackening his pace to the halting step of the one he guided. It was some little time before he could find the place he was directed to; when he did so, it was a tall, frowning, ruined house, jammed amidst many others, with the shutters up against the lower windows, and poverty told by all its rambling timbers.

"Open, sir, since you are kind enough to take pity on me," said the blind man, as he gave him a key, to which the crazy door yielded easily. "My room, such as it is, is the first on the fifth story."

It was a miserable chamber enough, bare and desolate, with a rough pallet bed, and an unspeakable nakedness and want about it. A little lamp burned dully, and threw its yellow light on the peculiar and striking figure of the man he had guided; and he looked at him curiously,—a man of ninety winters, with the dark olive of his skin furrowed like oak-bark, and his sweeping, pointed beard snow-white,—a man who had suffered much, needed much, endured much, and possibly done much evil in his day, yet commanding and solemn in his excessive years as the figure of a Belisarius sightless and poverty-stricken and forsaken by those for whom he had given his life-blood. He turned to Chandos with a stately and touching action.

"Sir, who you are I cannot tell; but from my soul I thank you, from my heart I would bless you—if I dared."

Chandos lingered, leaning against the barren, unsightly wall. He might be in a den of thieves, for aught he knew; but there was that in the Israelite (as he justly deemed him) that moved him to interest. Since the glory of his summer-day world had closed on him, he had gone far down into the depths of human suffering and human sin; he had known life in its darkest and in its worst, and he evaded nothing to which he could bring either aid or consolation. The mingled infirmity and wisdom of his glorious manhood had been to abhor and shun every sight and shape of pain; since he had tasted the bitterness of ruin, he had passed by no pain that he could hope to succour.

"You should not be alone at your years," he said, gently. "Have you nothing but this lost dog to take heed of you?"

"Nothing, sir: *he* is gone now."

"I trust not. I will try and find him for you. Pardon me, but at your age it is rare to be wholly solitary."

"Is it?" said the blind man, with a sententious melancholy. "I thought the reverse. We have outlived our due time. We have seen all die around us; we ought to be dead ourselves."

Chandos was silent; he stood, thoughtful and almost saddened by the Israelite's words. He was alone himself,—he, for whom the world had once been one wide palace, filled with courtiers and friends; he looked to be so alone to his grave.

At that moment there came the rush of eager feet, the panting of eager breath; the unlatched door of the room was burst open. A little dog of the Maltese breed scoured across the floor, and leaped on the old man with frantic caresses; its desertion had been but for a moment, and its conscience and its love had soon brought it back. The Jew took it fondly in his arms, and murmured tender names over it; then he turned his blind eyes on Chandos.

"Sir, I thank my little truant that through his abandonment I learned that one man lived so merciful as you."

"There are many; do not doubt that. Forgive me if I seem to force your confidence, but I would gladly know if I can aid you. Rich I am not, but there might be ways in which I could assist you."

He spoke very gently; this old man, grand as any sculpture of Abraham or Agamemnon, in his extreme loneliness, in his extreme poverty, awoke his sympathy.

The Hebrew drew his bent form straight, with a certain unconscious majesty.

"Sir, my confidence you cannot have; but it is only meet that you should know I am one who often has worked much evil, and who has been once branded as a felon."

Chandos looked at him in silence a moment; he could believe that evil had left its trace among the dark furrows of the sombre and stern face he looked on, but criminal shame seemed to have no place with the Jew's patriarchal calm and dignity.

"If it be so, there may be but the more cause that you need aid. Speak frankly with me."

"There are those who say my people never speak except to lie," said the Hebrew briefly. "It is untrue. But frank I cannot be with you,—with any. Could I have been so, I were not thus now."

"How? Did you refuse the truth, or was it denied you?"

"Both. I heard a story once,—whether fact or romance I cannot tell; it struck me. I will tell it you. There was an old soldier of the Grande Armée, who was bidden by his chief to execute some secret service and never speak of it. He did it; his absence on its errand was discovered; he was tried for desertion or disobedience, I forget which. Napoleon was present at the trial; the accused looked in the face of his master for permission to clear himself by revealing the truth; the face was chill as stone, mute as steel; there was *no consent* in it. The soldier bared his head, and held his peace; he underwent his chastisement

in silence; he muttered only ever after, in insanity, '*Silence à la mort!*'"

Chandos heard, moved to more than surprise. He saw that this poverty-worn blind Hebrew was no common criminal, and had had no common fate. He leaned forward and looked at him more earnestly.

"And the soldier's doom,—was that yours?" he asked.

The Jew bent his snow-white head, pressing the little nestling dog closer to his bosom.

"Much such an one."

"You were of the army, then?"

"No; but I had a chief as pitiless as Napoleon. No matter! he had the right to be so. It is not for me to speak."

The words were spoken with the patience of his race; an infinite pain passed over the harsh, saturnine sternness of his face.

"But you would seem to say that by silence you were wronged. Tell me more plainly."

A sigh escaped the close-pressed lips of the aged man.

"Sir, you have been good to me; it is not for me to deny what I can justly tell. That is not much. I was in the employ of an Englishman; we drove an evil trade,—a trade in men's ruin, in men's necessities, in men's desperation. It is a common trade enough, and there are hundreds who drive in their carriages, and live amidst the great, who have gained their wealth by that trade and by no other. I was a hard man, a shrewd, a merciless; I asked my pound of flesh, and I cut it remorselessly. Life had been bitter with me; it had baffled me when I would have done righteousness; it had denied me when I would have sought justice; it had damned me because of my wandering race: with the book of my religion in their hands, Christians flouted me and scourged me,—a Jew dog, a Jew cheat, a Jew liar! If I said truth, none believed me; if I did honestly, all laughed, and thought that I had some deeper scheme of villany beneath. I would have acted well with men, but they mocked me; and then —I took my revenge. I do not say it was right; but it was human."

He paused; the died-out light began to gather in his sunken eyes, the memories of manhood to kindle on his brown and withered face; his voice grew stronger and deeper, as it thrilled with the remembrance of other days. Chandos stood silent, looking on him with a strange force of interest, while the dull feeble flickering of the oil-flame shed its faint illumination on the old man's Syrian-like form.

"I was sorely tossed, and beaten, and reviled; I became bitter, and keen, and cruel. I was like iron to those Gentiles who needed me and, when they needed, cringed. I said in my soul, 'You call me a Jew robber; well, you shall feel my knife.' And yet I declare that, till they made me so, I had served men and striven to make them love me,—hard as it is for a poor man, and a Jew, to gain a friend among Christians! They have stolen our God; but they only blaspheme in His name, and call the people whose

creed they borrow, by the vilest obscenities of their streets! So I grew like a flint, and I checked not at cunning. One innocent may be wrongly suspected until he is made the thing that the libel has called him. I was a usurer: you know what that is,—a man who makes his gold out of tears of blood, and fills his caldron with human flesh till its seething brings him wealth. I had only one softness in me: it was my love for my wife."

His voice quivered slightly; even the memory of the dead love that lay so far away in the grave of buried days had power to shake him like a reed.

"She was as beautiful as the morning, twenty years or more younger than I; but she loved me with a great love, and while she was in my bosom she made me seek to be as she was. Well, she died. My life was as dark as midnight, and my heart was ice. For a while I was mad; when my senses came to me, I set myself to the lust of gold, to the grinding out of my deadly pain on the lives that had mocked me. Thus I became evil, and men cursed me,—justly then. I made much money, and, years after, I lost it, in schemes in which it had been risked. I fell in the straits of extreme poverty; in them I met, in the dens of a great city, an Englishman who was good to me and succoured me. Afterwards we entered into negotiations together; he joined my old firm,—it did not bear my name; he became *it:* in fact, I was but his manager, clerk, subordinate; but the public still thought me the principal. He was very clever, very able; he knew the world widely, and he had fashionable acquaintances by the hundred. Between us,—he secretly, I openly,—we spread our nets very far; we drew many lives into the meshes; we made much money; —he did, at least: his was the capital, his the profit; I did but the work at a salary. We were always strictly to the letter of the law; but within the law we were very hard. Oh, God! now that I am blind and forsaken, I know it! Well, meanwhile my son had come home to me from Spain,—a beautiful, gracious child, who brought his mother's look in his eyes. In him I was almost happy; for him I worked unceasingly; thinking of him, I did my master's bidding with alacrity and with little heed for those who suffered. For seven years my boy grew up with me from a child to a youth; and when he smiled at me with his mother's smile, I would have coined my life, if I could have done so, to purchase him an hour's pleasure. And in those seven years the firm had prospered marvellously, and my master—so I call him—made much wealth from it in secret. At the time of the eighth or ninth year, when my son was eighteen——"

He paused; though his eyes had no sight in them, he veiled them, drooping his head in shame as his words were resumed.

"The lad erred,—erred terribly. I cannot speak it! Dishonesty, glossed over, had been round him so long,—it was not *his* crime. He saw *us* thieve: how could he learn to keep his young hands pure? He forged my master's name, in thoughtlessness, and thinking, I believe, that such money was our common due, since I worked for it. I knew then a worse anguish than when my

darling had died. My master found it out,—he found everything out: the boy was in his power. He could have sent the young life to a felon's doom: he was merciful, and he spared him. For it let me ever hold his name in blessing."

He bent his head with a grave, reverential gesture, and was silent many moments, his lips mutely moving, as though in prayer for the benefactor of his only son.

"He spared the youth always: let it be ever remembered by me," he resumed, while his voice was broken and very faint. "To purchase his redemption, to repay his ransom, I gave my body and my mind, by night and by day, to travail. I did iniquity to buy my son's peace: that was my sin. My master was lenient, and spared him from accusation: that was his clemency. By one and by the other the child was saved. He was so gentle, so loving, so bright, so full of poetic thoughts and noble longing; it must have been a mortal fear that ever drove him to that single crime! Or rather, I have thought later, it was the thoughtless fault of a child who did not know the error that he did. Well, my master had been pitiful to the thing I loved. I owed him my life—more than my life—for that. A few years, and the test came to me. I have said inviolate secrecy was kept on his association with the business that I conducted. No living creature guessed it. His own friends by the score were among our clients, among our victims; but none of them ever dreamt that *he* had anything to do with the usury on which they heaped their curses. One night he had visited the office (a thing he rarely did), and had taken away with him the title-deeds and family papers of one whose extremity of need had forced him to lodge them with me as security for an immediate loan. That very night their owner came down in hot haste; he had obtained money by a sudden and marvellous stroke of fortune, and was breathless to recover his pawned papers and pay back the loan. The deeds were not there! To say *where* they were would have been to betray my master. I could not produce them; I could not explain their absence. The gentleman was very fiery and furious; he would not wait; he demanded his papers back. Give them I could not, and I had neither time nor means to communicate with my master. The gentleman, hot-blooded and young, gave me into arrest for their detention and disappearance. The trial ensued. Since my arrest I had watched and waited for some word, some sign, from my master which should tell me what I should do. I waited in vain: none came. I was placed in the dock, and tried for the theft of the deeds. My counsel were bitter towards me, because I would not be 'frank' with them and explain; I could only be silent unless my master gave me freedom to speak. *He* knew he could trust me. Besides, had he not the lad's fame and life in his power? He was there,—in court,—listening. I looked at him; he looked at me. I read 'silence' hidden on his face, as the soldier saw it on Napoleon's. It was enough. I was silent. It was his due, and my right of obedience. He had spared my son in his error; I had sworn to keep his secret till death. The trial took its course; they found me guilty. I was sentenced to ten years' penal servitude.

It was a grave offence. The deeds were gone: they were never found: I suppose my master destroyed them. It was a fearful loss for their owner, and they could not choose but judge that I had held them back or burnt them, for theft or for the sake of extortion. I suffered the punishment; but I never broke my silence."

There was a sublime simplicity, an inexpressible grandeur, on the old man, as he spoke, bowing his head as though borne down by the weight of that enforced burden of silence, stretching out his trembling hands as though in supplication to God to witness how he had kept his oath.

Chandos, where he stood in the gloom of the poverty-stricken chamber, uncovered his head with a reverent action, before the sightless gaze of the blind man.

"Let the evil of your life be what it may, in that martyrdom you washed it out with a nobility men seldom reach."

His words were low and heartfelt: the unconscious dignity of the self-devotion and of the fidelity to a promised word was too lofty to his thought to be insulted with any offering of mere pity.

A warmth of surprise and of pleasure passed over the withered olive face of the Israelite,—though it faded almost instantly.

"It was duty," he said, simply,—"the duty of a debtor."

"Rather it was the sacrifice of a martyr. But he, this brutal taskmaster, who could condemn you to such a doom, who could stand by and see you suffer for his sake,—what of him?"

"I say nothing of him: he is sacred to me!"

"Sacred! though he cursed you thus?"

"Sacred, because he spared my son."

Chandos bent his head.

"I understand you; I honour you. But it was a terrible ordeal. Few construe duty so. And your son,—what of him?"

"I am as one dead to him."

Ignatius Mathias said the words very softly, whilst over the bronzed, worn rigidity of his patient face came the softer look which it only wore at the thought of Agostino.

"Dead to him? Is he, then, so ungrateful?"

The Hebrew shook his head with a quick negative gesture of his hands.

"He is never ungrateful; he felt only too vividly, and he loved me well. But I had sent him out of the country before this happened—sent him, my master permitting, to people of mine in Mexico. It was bitter for me to sever from him. But the lad's spirit was broken; I knew nothing but change of scene could ever restore him. Journals did not reach him there in the western country. I learned that he was recovering health and courage, was prosecuting a career for which he had from childhood shown genius. I learned that he knew nothing of my arrest and of my trial: I thanked God; for I knew how it would have grieved him. He might have done something very rash, had he heard that I suffered or was accused. As it was, I bade them tell him I was dead. It would cause him pain, great pain,—for he loved me, strange as it may seem that he should,—but less pain than the

shame that must have fallen on him with the other knowledge. It was weak in me, perhaps, but I could not bear that my only son should think, with the world, that I could be guilty of that crime. And if he had not thought it, it would have been worse; he would have been galled to some act of desperation. He heard, as I say, of my death; he suffered, but less than he would have suffered knowing the truth, knowing the punishment I underwent. Yet the deadliest thing in my chastisement was that I could never look on his face, never listen to his voice, never let him hear that I lived!"

The old man's voice faltered slightly; even his strength, that had been like wrought iron to endure, and that had held his soul in patience for so long, could not look back at that time of torture and keep its force unbroken.

"At the end of ten years I was liberated. They had not been cruel to me as a convict. They pitied my age, I think, though at first they had little mercy because they held me a Jew thief. I was free—a beggar, of course; and at eighty-four years one cannot begin the world again. Besides, I was as one branded: go where I would, the police followed me, and warned others of me: I was a leper and a pariah in the midst of men. I did not starve, for my people are good to the helpless; but all thought me guilty, and no creature trusted me. I heard of my darling, of my son: he was prosperous. He was achieving fame and success in the life he had chosen: he was, I hoped, happy. I could not be so brutal, so selfish, as to seek him out and say, 'Behold, your father lives!' when he must have found in his father a convicted felon just set free from his public punishment. I could not blight his youth and his peace by rising up, as it were, from the grave, and forcing in on him my age, my poverty, my disgrace, as the world held it. He had mourned for me, and ceased to mourn long before: I could not open his wounds afresh; I could not humiliate him with a criminal's claim on him. Not that I wronged him ever, not that I ever doubted him; let me have been what I should, I knew his heart would be tender to me, and his roof be offered me in shelter. But *because* I knew, I could not bring that wretchedness on him; I could not injure him in the world's sight by standing by him a liberated felon; I could not torture him by showing him my wrists, on which the chains of the convict gang had weighed, by bidding him look back with me upon my prison-cell, my prison-shame. I left him to believe me dead. I never looked upon his face except by stealth. I never listened to his voice except standing hidden in some dark archway to hear him speak as he passed by me in the streets. I have watched for hours under the shelter of green leaves to catch one glance of him as he came forth. I have waited for a whole night through, in storm or snow, to see him leave some house of pleasure or some labour of his art. It was my only thought, my only joy. I thanked God that I still lived in the days when I had looked a moment on his beauty. And now that too is gone. I am blind, and I have nothing left except to listen for the echo of his step!"

Silence followed his closing words; his head sank, his hands were pressed together like one who is tortured beyond his strength. All answer, all consolation, seemed mockery beside the supreme renunciation and desolation of this living sacrifice of an immeasurable love, that gave itself to martyrdom without a thought of its own devotion, without a memory of the vastness of its own unasked and unrewarded sacrifice.

Veneration, strong as his pity, moved the blind man's auditor as he heard; the heroism of the abnegation was noble in his sight, with a nobility that no words could dare taint or outrage with either compassion or homage,—a nobility that raised the Hebrew outcast to a loftier height than the great of the earth often reach, than the sunlight of a fair fate ever gives.

"Your Psalmist said that he had never beheld the righteous forsaken, nor the seed of the virtuous begging their bread," he said, slowly, at length. "How is it that *you*, then, are poor? You should be in the smile of your God."

The Israelite sighed wearily.

"It has ever seemed to me that David spoke in a bitter irony. Yonder in Syria, as here among us, sin throve, doubtless, and loyal faith passed unnoticed, unrecompensed by a crust. Yet I do not say this for myself. I merited all I suffered. I was merciless; I lived to want mercy. It was very just."

There was the inexorable meting out of the Mosaic code to his own past, and to his own errors, in the still, calm, iron resignation.

"Moreover," he added, with a certain light and hope that kindled the faded fire of his sightless eyes, "if we follow duty because it brings us gold and peace and man's applause, where is there effort in the choice of it? It is only when it is hard that there can be any loyalty in its acceptance. Not that *I* should speak of this. I loved evil and avarice and cruelty too long, and followed them too fondly."

"At the least, your atonement might outweigh the crime of a Cain!"

The Hebrew sighed wearily again.

"Can evil ever be outweighed? I doubt it. We may strive to atone, but we can never efface. The past work spreads, and spreads, and spreads, like a river broken from its banks; and all the coffer-dams we raise in our atonement cannot stay the rushing of the waters we have once let loose. Ah! if when evil is begun we knew where it would stretch, men's hands would be kept pure from the very dread of their own awful omnipotence for ruin!"

The words died faintly away. Remorse had too wide a part in this man's memories for any thought that he redeemed his past crimes by his present sacrifice to have power to enter into him in any form of consolation.

He recovered himself with an effort, raising his blind eyes as though he could still read the face of the one who listened to him.

"Sir, you have heard me with a gentle patience. I thank you.

I never spoke of these things until I spoke them now to you. Your voice is sweet and compassionate; it seems to me as though I had once heard it before now. Will you tell me your name among men?"

"Willingly; though I have no memory that we have ever met before. My name is Chandos."

A change, as intense as though some sudden pang of disease had seized him, convulsed the Israelite's whole frame; his thin withered lips closed tight, as though to hold in words that rushed to them; his hands clenched together. A revulsion passed over him, as if the whole dark, poisonous, pent tide of his past years swept in, killing with their return all the higher and better thoughts that but now had ruled him.

"Do you know me?" asked Chandos, in surprise.

The Spanish Jew answered with an effort, and his voice was harsh and jarring:—

"I know your name, sir; all the world does."

Chandos looked at him with awakened curiosity: the agitation which this old man showed at his recognition was scarcely compatible with the mere scant knowledge of his public reputation. Still, no remembrance of the solitary morning in the porphyry chamber, when he had seen the Castilian, came to him. In that terrible hour he had only been conscious of a sea of unfamiliar faces,—thirsty faces eager for his wealth, strange faces forcing themselves in to see the ruin of his race, and hungry, insolent faces gathered there to be the witnesses of his abdication and his fall. He remembered them distinctly no more than Scipio could have remembered the features of each unit of the libellous crowd that thronged about him to attaint his honour and discrown his dignity, until beneath the shadow of the Temple of Jupiter he rebuked them with one word,—"Zama."

"If you know my name, then," he said, after a slight pause, "I hope you will let it be a guarantee to you that I will do my utmost to serve you, if you will but show me the way. You interest me powerfully, and I honour you from my heart. Can I not help you?"

The old man turned away, and leaned over the lamp, so shading it that the light burned low: he had learned the marvellous self-guidance of the blind in those matters, and knew by its warmth that the flame was high and fell upon his face.

"No one can help me, sir. That I may be forgotten is all I ask."

"Do you mistrust my willingness, then? I hope not," said Chandos, gently. He noted the harsh, abrupt change in the Jew's manner; but he thought it might be but the weariness and waywardness of old age and long and bitter endurance.

"I mistrust you in nothing," said the Hebrew, while his voice was very low. "But I need no aid: my people will not let me want. I thank you for your goodness; and I bid you remember me no more."

There was a mingled austerity and appeal in the tone that gave

it a singular vibration of feeling; in it there was something like the thrill of shame.

Chandos lingered a moment still; he was loath to leave the old and sightless sufferer to his solitude, yet he saw that his presence was unwelcome now, however gratitude forbade the Israelite to say it.

"But your people forsake you," he persisted, gently; "you have but a dog for your friend. I have known what such solitude is; I would gladly aid you in yours. Will you not trust me with your name, at the least?—or your son's name?"

The Hebrew turned resolutely away, though his voice trembled as he replied,—

"My son's will never pass my lips. Mine was buried for ever in my felon's cell. I have told you—I am dead! Leave me, sir; and believe me an ingrate, if you will. I have been many things that are worse."

Chandos looked at him regretfully, wonderingly; he was loath to quit the chamber in which so strange and so nameless a tale had been unfolded to him.

"There is nothing worse; but I shall credit no evil of you," he answered; "and when you need friendship or assistance, think of my name, and send to me."

There was no reply: the face of the blind man was turned from him. He waited a moment longer, then went out, and closed the narrow door of the room, leaving the Hebrew to his loneliness.

He would willingly have done more here, but he knew not how.

The little dog, sole companion of the Castilian's solitude, nestling to him, as the door closed, with caressing fondness, felt great tears fall slowly one by one upon its pretty head, and lifted itself eagerly to fondle closer in the old man's bosom. But Ignatius Mathias paid it no heed; he had no answering word for it: his hands were wrung together in an agony.

"Oh, God!" he murmured, "and I lent my aid to rob, to ruin, to destroy him! Oh, God! why could I not die before he heaped the fire on my guilty head, with his gentle words, with his pitying mercy?"

CHAPTER VII.

"PALE COMME UN BEAU SOIR D'AUTOMNE."

As Chandos descended the staircase, he paused to ask a woman, who seemed mistress of the house, the Hebrew's name. She gave him the *alias* by which the old man was known there. It told him nothing: the real name would scarcely have told more. The whole time of his adversity was almost a blank in his memory, blotted out at the moment of his suffering by that suffering's sheer intensity, and effaced yet more utterly, later on, by the gambler's orgies into which for a year he had sunk without an effort at redemption. It seemed to him sometimes now that the cloudless

life he had led ere then must have been the golden and lotus-teeped dream of some summer night: of the darkness which had followed on its ending he had barely more recollection than a man has of the phantasma of fever. Between the night when he had first learned his irreparable losses, and that on which he had been struck down by his foe in the court of the Temple, all was a blank to him, from which a few broken points of terrible remembrance alone stood out,—the sole measure-marks in that wide waste of desolation.

The stairs were narrow and crooked, ill lit by a dusky oil-lamp flickering low in its socket. Something in the house had seemed familiar to him, and as he passed downward he knew it again. It was the place in which he had laid dying and unconscious, with the winter stars looking down through the broken garret-roof, and the dog's fidelity alone watching beside him. He shuddered as he recalled it: for the moment the thought stole on him, would it not have been better that his life should have ended there? The richness and the frailty of his nature alike had needed light and colour, and the sweetness of delight, and the vivid hues of beauty and of pleasure. Now that, like Adam, he had long toiled alone in the bleak and barren earth of his exile, like Adam he might have gathered the bitter wisdom of far-reaching knowledge; but also, like Adam, the gates of Paradise had closed on him for ever. He was a wanderer, and without joy; there were times, as he had said that night, when he wished to God that it had been given him to die in his youth.

As he passed now down the stairs, the black, sweeping folds of a woman's dress touched him: he paused to give her space. In the gleam of the lamp-light a face, still beautiful, though haggard and darkened, was turned on him: it was the face of Beatrix Lennox.

She started, and a gentler, better look shadowed and softened her features.

" You!"

She knew him,—knew him as soon as her eyes lighted on him in that dusky yellow gloom,—this woman who, in the midst of a reckless, sensuous, unscrupulous, world-defiant life, had borne him a tenderness as silent as death, pure as light. His face was graven on her heart,—that face which she had first known in all the splendour and all the radiance of its earliest manhood,—which she had recognised once in the blackness of the stormy, snow-veiled winter night,—which she knew now in the dignity and the sadness of its later years.

He paused a moment, surprised and uncertain. All that past time was so dim to him, all remembrance of her had been so merged in the misery he had endured on the night of their last parting, when he had learned that the one he then loved had forsaken him, and had been so swept away in the blank of starvation and of bodily illness which had succeeded it, that he had little memory of all he had owed her in that wintry midnight when she had found him sinking into the sleep of death. It was confused, and it made indistinct even his knowledge of her as she stood be-

side him now, after the passage of so many years. Her eyes, once so victorious in their empire, so unsparing in their sorcery, dwelt on him with an extreme desolation.

"Ah! you have forgotten me? Well you may; even Death forgets me, I think."

Her voice, so liquid and so silver-sweet, stirred his memory as the features in their change could not do. He took her hands in his.

"Forgotten? Never. Do not so wrong my gratitude. Some part of my life seems a blank to me; but that life lived in me at all was owing to you. And now that we meet, how can I thank you? There are no words for such a service."

She smiled, though her eyes still dwelt on him with that desolate and longing look.

"Is it so great a service to save life? Mercy were rather the other way. Yet perhaps not for you; you have made a noble use of adversity. But it was little enough *I* did. I would have served you, God knows; but the power was never mine."

He looked at her with a pang at his heart. All the companions of that joyous royalty, in which Fortune had seemed but the slave to obey his wish and to crown his desire, were dead or lost, forgotten or unknown to him, now; and her voice struck chords long unsounded and better left in peace,—awoke memories of a world abandoned for ever, of a youth for ever gone. Those long nights of pleasure, those dazzling eyes of women, those chimes of laughter without a care, those flower-smothered Cleopatran revels, those hours of careless joyance that had not a thought of the morrow,—how far away they seemed! He stood looking down on her in the sombre shadow of the wretched staircase, his thoughts rather in the past than with her. He did not know that she loved him,—he had never known it,—loved him so that she, the reckless and lawless Bohemian, would for his sake, had it been possible, have led the noblest life that ever woman led on earth,—loved him so that, through that purer love hating herself, she would no more, in the days of her beauty, have wooed him to her than she would have slain him, no more have offered him her tenderness than she would have offered him hemlock,—loved him too well ever to summon him amidst her lovers.

"How is it that we have never met?" he asked her,—"never met until in such a place as this and at such an hour?"

She smiled. *She* had looked on his face many and many a time, unseen herself; she had suffered for him in his bitterness, she had gloried in his endurance, though she had never gone nigh him, but had rather withdrawn herself from every chance of recognition.

"You have never seen me? I have been long dead, you know. Women die when their beauty dies. Come within: I have one word to say to you."

She turned into a chamber somewhat lower on the staircase, poor, dark, chilly, in the feeble light of flickering candles.

"You live here?"

When he had known this woman, she had commanded what she

would from peers and princes, who had been only too proud to be allowed the honour of ruin for her sake.

She flung off her the heavy folds of her cloak; and, as the richer hues of the dress beneath were dimly caught in the faint light, there was something still of the old regality which had made Beatrix Lennox the fairest name and the haughtiest queen in the whole of the dauntless army of the Free Companions.

"No; I am not quite so bad as that yet. I came here to-night to see one who is dying fast, with not a living soul to tend him."

"Ah! you belied the charity of your heart, then? at least you know the mercy of human pity still, as you knew it once for me."

"Hush! Charity? *Mine?* You do not know what you say. Is repenting of a millionth part of a torrent of evil—charity? The man who dies there was *my* victim. Years ago I drew him on till he fooled away everything he owned for my sake. I cared no more for him than for the sands of the sea; but it amused me to watch how far his folly would go. He loved his wife; I made him hate her. He had ambition; I made him scoff at it. He had riches; I made him squander them for an hour's caprice of mine. He had honours; I made him trail them in the mud, like Raleigh's cloak, that I might set my foot on them. Well, then I flung him away like a faded flower, like a beryl out of fashion; and I find him, years after, dying in want and shame. Call mine charity? Call me a murderess, rather!"

There were no tears in her eyes; but there were more intense misery and remorse in the calm words than ever tears yet uttered.

He looked on her with infinite compassion.

"*I* call you nothing harsh: you were at least my saviour."

Her beautiful, dark, wild eyes gazed at him with gratitude, in which no acceptance of the forgiveness of herself mingled.

"Ah, Chandos, I am heart-sick of the world's babble about *your* sex's tempting. It is *we* who tempt you; it is *we* who blindfold you,—*we* who are never satisfied till we have won your lives to break them,—*we* who curse you in sin and in pleasure, in license and in marriage,—*we* who, if we see you at peace, think our vanity is at stake till we drive peace away! The moralists rant of us as martyrs! They little know that our mockery of love destroys a thousand-fold more lives than it has ever blessed."

She spoke with passionate bitterness. He answered nothing; he felt the truth of her words too well; and yet with the thoughts of love there stole on him one fresh, one soft memory,—that of the child Castalia.

Beatrix Lennox roused herself with the smile which even in its sadness had something of the sorcery that nature had given her, and that death alone could take away.

"Forgive me! It was not to speak of these things that I brought you here. It was but to ask you, have you found yet who is your worst foe?"

"Yes; I was my own."

"Well, you were,—because you loved others better than you loved yourself. But that is not my meaning. Long ago, did you

ever receive an anonymous letter that warned you against John Trevenna?"

His face darkened at the name. He paused, silent for a moment. She gave him no time to reply.

"If you did, I wrote it."

"You?"

"I! I dared not warn you more openly; I was in his power, as he had so many in his power. I knew that he hated you terribly, bitterly. There was something between you he never pardoned. Why was it? What wrong had you ever done him?"

"None: I only served him."

"Ah! then it was that he could not forgive! I knew it as women know many things men never dream that they even divine. I knew it by a thousand slight signs, a thousand half-betrayals, which escaped his caution and your notice, but which told his secret to me. As for its root, I knew nothing. It was jealousy; but whether simply of your social superiorities, or whether complicated by more personal antagonism, I cannot tell. I used to fancy that some woman might be the cause of the envy. Where tares grow to choke the wheat, it is always *our* hands that sow them!"

"A woman?" He thought of the words that, long years before, had been spoken by the old man whom his adversity had slain. "There was no love-feud between us; and I doubt if love ever touched him: he was not one to harbour it."

"An egotist can always love well enough to deny what he loves to another. Be the cause what it will, he hated you,—hates still, I have no doubt, though the world has found out an idol and a celebrity in him. Ah, Heaven! what a travesty of all justice is that man's success!"

"It is the due of his intellect."

It was not in him to disparage the merits or the attainments of his foe. She looked at him with a wonder in which mingled something of impatience, more of veneration.

"You speak well of your worst traitor!"

"I but give him the due of his abilities: you would not, surely, have me do less?"

"But you know he is your vilest enemy."

"Yes; he has declared himself so."

"And still you give him generous words?"

"Words? What are words? If it ever came to deeds, I might prove little better than one in brute vengeance."

The animal lust, the evil leaven, which lie in the loftiest and the purest forms of human nature, ready to rouse and steep themselves in Cain's revenge, were on him as he spoke. He knew how this man's outrage had power to move him; he knew how, if vengeance ever came into his hand, he would have passion in its using, beside which all the tolerance and self-knowledge gathered from suffering would break like reeds, would crumble as ashes.

She watched him still with that same blent wonder and reverence in her aching eyes.

"Chandos, for less than this Iscariot's crime men have cursed their foes living and dying; and you—you still are just to him!"

"Because the man is vile, would you have me sink so low myself as to deny him his meed of intellect, and decry his success, like a mortified woman who depreciates her rival? He is famous, and his intellect deserves his fame. But think me none the better that I say so. There are times when I could find it in me, if a reckoning came between us, to wring life out of him as I might wring it out of any snake that poisoned me."

There was the vibration of intense passion in the words, though they were low-spoken. As the evil influence of Trevenna had betrayed his youth and drawn his manhood to its ruin, so it entered him now and filled him with the virus of brute longing, and shook to their roots the proud patience and the pain-taught self-discipline which he had learned in the years of his exile. There were times when, remembering the friendship and the gifts he had lavished on this man, and remembering the taunts, the mockery, the hatred, the injury with which he had in turn been requited, he could have gone back to the old barbaric weapons, and dealt with the traitor hand to hand, blow for blow.

The venom of envy could never enter him; but he would have been more than human if, through these many years of loss, and weariness, and divorce from all he had once loved and owned, the triumphant passage of the man who would but for his aid have been obscured in a debtor's prison, the plaudits that the world bestowed on the man whom he knew base as any assassin who slew what had saved and succoured him, had not possessed an exceeding bitterness for him,—had not sickened him oftentimes of all hope or belief in justice, earthly or divine. Once Trevenna had hoped to wreck his genius as well as his peace, his intellect as well as his fortune, his soul as well as his beauty and his heritage. Once Trevenna had loved to think that his well-planned murder would kill in its victim all higher instincts, all likeness of honour, and all purity of conscience: it was possible that, even at the end, his wish might find fruition,—that, under the weight of accumulated wrongs, long-chained passions and long-stained endurance might give way and find their fall in dealing retribution, which, just in its chastisement, would still be the forbidden justice of some involuntary and avenging crime. Some thought of this passed over the mind of the world-worn and reckless Bohemian who gazed at him. She stooped forward eagerly, and, in the yellow shadows, the softened emotion that was upon it lent the fairness of other years to her face.

"Chandos, whatever he be, he is beneath you. An evil impulse wrung from you is more than all his baseness is worth. He has robbed you, I believe, of much; but his worst robbery will be if ever he wrench from you your better, your nobler nature."

An impatient sigh escaped him.

"That is to speak idly. I am no better than other men; and I am no demi-god, to rise above all natural passions and see evil triumph unmoved. It were a poor, paltry vanity to point at his

successes and tell men they were unjust because the winner of them was my foe. He is famous; let them make him so. But not the less, if ever the power of chastisement come into my hands, shall I hold the widest as his due. Robbed me, you say? Yes, I believe now that half my ruin was robbery, or little better; but the theft was wisely to windward of the law. If he thieved from me, there was no proof of it."

She shook her head.

"He was too keen, too prudent, too wise. Devour your substance I know that he did; but he would have ever been mindful of Bible precedent, and would only have taken your inheritance by persuading you to disinherit yourself for some pottage of pleasure or of indolence. Men who break laws are, at their best, but half knave, half fool: he is too able to be numbered among them."

"Doubtless! the world's greatest criminals are those who never stand in a dock," he answered her, as his mind went back to the story of the blind Hebrew. "There is a man here, a Jew, whose history tells that: he rejects all assistance, almost all sympathy; but he merits both. Will you see him, if it be possible?"

"Surely,—for you. A blind Jew? I have noticed him as I passed; but I am no fit missionary of consolation to any living thing! *I*, Beatrix Lennox!"

"Well, you," he said, gently,—"you are here on an errand of mercy to-night."

She flashed on him a glance almost fierce, had it not been so melancholy.

"*Grand' chose!* I am here because one whom I murdered lies dying, without a creature to tend his death-bed. A noble mission, truly! Ah, Chandos, I am not one of those miserable cravens who, having given all the flower of their years to the working of evil, buy a cheap virtue back by insulting a God they disbelieved in over their revels, with the offer of the few tame, barren, untempted years they have left them! That is a wretched travesty, a terrible blasphemy: do not think I stoop to it. And yet *you*—you who know human nature so well, and are so gentle to it, though it basely abandoned you—you, who have the heart of a poet and the tolerance of a philosopher—will believe me when I tell you that there are times when I hate myself more utterly than any ever hated me, justly though they had cause? You will know that there may be so vast an evil in us, and yet that there may linger some conscience?" Her words swept on, without waiting for answer. "You never knew my story. None will ever know it,—as it was. I was sold into marriage, almost in childhood, as slave-girls are sold to a harem. Well, if I hated my bondage as they hate theirs, where was the wonder? where was the sin? But that matters nothing. Those who err can always find apology of their error; I will be no such coward. Still, it was through this that John Trevenna had his hold on me. My husband"—her dark, imperial face still flushed and the long

nazel eyes still flashed at the words—"held his wife's charms only as his property, to turn to such account as he would. He was very poor, very extravagant. He found that rich men, fashionable men, admiring me, gave horses and carriages, and venison, and game, and dinners, and invitations to great houses, and anything and everything, and would play on in our drawing-rooms at whist and billiards till the stakes and the bets rose to thousands and tens of thousands. You can guess the rest. I was his decoy-bird. What a school of shamelessness for a girl not twenty! How I loathed it! how I loathed it!—only the more because it was glossed over with fashion. Well, Trevenna had immense sway over Colonel Lennox; he had it over every one, when he cared to attain it. He saw my hatred of the part I was driven to play; he contrived to lighten it. He never hinted any love; it served to give me confidence in him; he was the only man who never spoke of it to me, never so much as whispered a thought of it. He earned my gratitude by freeing me from my husband's persecution; but he made me understand that, in return, I must serve him by acquainting him with all the embarrassments, all the weaknesses, of the innumerable men about me. I was glad to comply: the terms seemed light, and, mind you, they were only tacitly offered. I bought my freedom by being his tool. I did not know I did harm then: I have believed, since, that I did more than when I allured them by my coquetries that my husband might win their gold at pool or at cards. That was how I came into Trevenna's power; that was why I dared not write more openly to you of a hatred I had fathomed, though he had never uttered it. Forgive me, Chandos, if you can, for so much weakness, so much selfishness!"

He had listened, absorbed in the history she told, in the dark and cruel pressure which had been upon one whom the world had held so heartless, so reckless, so wayward, so dazzling: he started at the last words like one whose dream is broken.

"Forgive! I have nothing to forgive. I had no claim that you should care for my friends or my foes. And this was the way he gained his power! My God! is it possible——"

He did not end his words; the thought swept past him, extravagant and vague, were the taskmaster of Beatrix Lennox and the taskmaster of the Castilian Jew one and the same? She looked up; she saw his face darken; she heard his breath catch as, for the first time, the possibility that his enemy was the tyrant whose hand had lain so heavy on the Hebrew, flashed on him.

"What is it?"

"Your words have brought a strange fancy to me; that is all. A groundless one, perhaps, yet one I must follow."

She rose; and her deep, sad eyes dwelt on him with a love that she had never let him read,—she in whose hands love had been but a net and a snare.

"Follow it, then, and God speed you! It is of your enemy, of my bondmaster?"

He bent his head in silence. Thoughts had rushed in on him

with so sudden and so passionate a force that to frame them to words was impossible; they were baseless and shapeless as a dream, but they came with an irresistible might of conviction. He waited a moment, with the mechanical instinct of courtesy.

"Can I not aid you? The dying man whom you spoke of, can I do nothing for him?"

She gave a gesture of dissent, almost savage,—if the softness of her inalienable grace could have ever let her be so.

"Why always think of others instead of yourself? You had never been ruined but for that sublime folly! No; you can do nothing for him. He will be dead by the dawn. I killed him. I never cared for him; but I do care that you should not look on my work. It has been thoroughly done: no woman ever wrecks by halves."

There was in the half-ironic, half-scornful calmness of the words a grief deeper than lies in any abandonment of sorrow. He stooped over her an instant, touched, and forgetting his own thoughts in hers.

"I do not say, Feel no remorse; for that were to say, Deny the truest of your instincts. But you were cruelly wronged, cruelly driven. There is much nobility still, where so much tenderness lingers. Farewell: we shall meet again?"

She looked at him with that long, lingering look that had so hopeless a melancholy.

"Ah! I do not know. Death will be here to-night; perhaps he will be gentle and generous for once, and take me with him,—at least, if his promised sleep have no awakening. There is the fear, —the old Hamlet-fear, never set at rest either way!"

He left her; and she leaned awhile against the bare table, her hands clenched in the still rich masses of her hair, her lips pressed in a close weary line, her eyes filling slowly with tears.

"Ah!" she mused, in the aching of her heart, "have nine-tenths of us ever any real chance to be the best we might? If I had lived for him, if he had ever loved me, or one like him, no woman would have been truer, gentler, purer, stronger to serve him, or more utterly under his law and at his feet, than I!"

He left her, and went again upward to the Hebrew's chamber. A strange instinct of vengeance, a sudden impulse of belief, urged him on. Though no hint had been dropped that the Jew's tyrant was the enemy of his own life, a conviction strong as knowledge had centred in him that the man spoken of was John Trevenna. He thrust the door open hurriedly, and entered; the little lamp still burned dully there, but the blind Israelite and the dog were both gone. Standing alone in the desolation of the narrow chamber, he could almost have believed that the tale he had heard had been a dream of the night, and the antique form of the old man but one of its sleep-born phantoms. There had passed but the space which he had spent with Beatrix Lennox since he had been told the recital: yet either answer was purposely denied to his questions, or the refuge the Jew had sought amidst the people of his nation was too secret to be unearthed, for no search

and no inquiry brought a trace of him; he was lost, with the vague outline of his history left unfilled, lost in the wide wilderness of a large city's nameless poverty.

With its memory upon him, Chandos went out into the grey, subdued light of the now-breaking dawn; the thoughts which had moved him had stirred depths which time had long sealed. For many years he had striven to put from him the remembrance alike of his wrongs and of his losses; he had believed the first to be beyond avenging, as the latter were beyond redemption; he had striven to live only the impersonal life of the thinker, of the scholar, to leave behind him alike the unnerving weight of regret and the baneful indulgence of a vain suspicion. But here the things of those dead days had risen and forced themselves on him; to his mind came what until then had not touched him,—the belief that his foe had dealt him wider treachery than the mere treachery of friendship,—that Trevenna had done more than leave him unwarned in a dangerous downward course, but had robbed him and trepanned him under the smooth surface of fair and honest service. The utter extravagance and heedlessness of his joyous reign had left him no title to accuse another of causing any share of the destruction which followed on it; and the organisation of his mind was one to which such an accusation could but very slowly, and only on sheer certainty, suggest itself. Yet now, looking backward to innumerable memories, he believed that, in the pale of the law, his traitor had been as guilty of embezzlement as any within the law's arraignment; he believed that his antagonist had tempted, blinded, robbed, and betrayed him on a set and merciless scheme.

Recalling the points of the Spanish Jew's relation, slight and nameless as the recital had been in much, something that was near the actual truth came before his thoughts. He remembered how heavily the claims of a money-lender's house had pressed on him for obligations in his own name, and for those where his name had been lent to others. If his foe and the Hebrew's tyrant were one, how vast a network of intrigue and fraud might there not have been wound about him! It was but imagination, it was but analogy and possibility, that suggested themselves vaguely to him: yet they fastened there, and an instinct for the "wild justice" of revenge woke with it, passionate and unsparing. To fling his foe down and hold him in a death-gripe, as the hound pulls down the boar, was a longing as intense upon him in its dominion as it was on David of Israel, when the treachery of men and the triumph of evil-doers broke asunder his faith and wrung the fire of imprecation from his lips.

As he looked back on all he had suffered, all he had lost, all he had seen die out from him for ever, and all that for ever had forsaken him, he felt the black blood of the old murderous instinct latent in all human hearts rise and burn in him: utterly foreign to his nature, once grafted, it took the deadlier hold.

"O God!" he said, half aloud, in his clenched teeth, as he passed the entrance of the miserable house, "shall his crimes *never* find him out?"

These crimes had given his betrayer a long immunity, they had given him a lifetime of success; they had given him riches and favour and the fruition of ripe ambitions; they had given him the desire of his heart and the laurels of the world:—would the time ever come when they should be quoted against him and strip him bare in the sight of the people? The bitterness of unbelief, the weariness of desolation, fell on Chandos as the doubt pursued him. He had cleaved to honour for its own sake, and had loved and served men, asking no recompense; and he remained without reward. Pursuing fraud, and tyranny, and the wisdom of self-love, and the tortuous routes of unscrupulous sagacity, his enemy prospered in the sight of the world, and put his hand to nothing that ever failed him. There was a pitiless, cold, mocking sarcasm in the contrast, which left the problem of human existence dark as night in its mystery, which shook and loosened the one sheet-anchor of his life,—his loyalty to truth for truth's own sake.

The heart-sickness of Pilate's doubt was on him; and he asked in his soul, "What *is* truth?"

As he passed out into the narrow-arched doorway, some young revellers reeled past him,—handsome, dissolute, titled youths, who had been flinging themselves in the air in the mad dances till the dawn, at a ball of the people, dressed as Pierrots and Arlequins. They were going now to their waiting carriages, talking and laughing, while the sound of their voices echoed through the stillness of the breaking day in disjointed sentences.

"Castalia! *Beau nom!* Selling lilies with a face like a Titian:—how poetic!"

"Very. But somebody, apparently, had left her to the very dull prose of wanting her bread,—a common colophon to our idyls!"

"Wandering with a few flowers; and Villeroy could neither tempt her nor trap her! He must have been very *bête!* Or she——"

"A Pythoness. He is terribly sore on the subject. *Pardieu!* I wish we had her here! Women grow dreadfully ugly."

They had passed, almost ere the sense of the words had reached his ear and pierced the depths of his thoughts: involuntarily he paused where he stood in the entrance.

"Castalia!"

He murmured the name with a pang: the indefinite words he had heard suggested so terrible a fate for her; and his heart went out to her in an infinite tenderness,—that beautiful child, brilliant as any passion-flower, desolate as any stricken fawn!"

"Who is she?"

Beatrix Lennox, standing unseen near him, heard alike the revellers' words and his echo of the name.

He started and turned to her.

"She whom they spoke of? I do not know; at least, I hope to Heaven I do not!"

"But the one who is in your thoughts?"

She, who loved him, had caught the softness of his voice and its

eager dread as he had repeated the name that had suddenly floated to his ear in the depths of Paris. He paused a moment; then he answered her:—

"You have a woman's heart; if it can feel pity, know it for her. She is nameless, motherless, friendless; and I could only—as a harsh mercy, yet the best left to me—leave her."

Her face grew paler; her lips set slightly.

"You loved her, Chandos?"

An impatient sigh escaped him.

"No! at least those follies are dead with my youth. If we had met earlier——"

"Love is not dead in you; it will revive," she said, simply. "Tell me of her."

"There is nothing to tell. Her parentage is unknown; she lives below Vallombrosa, and has but this one name,—Castalia. She will have the beauty and the genius of a Corinne; and she lies under the ban of illegitimacy, with no haven except a convent."

"But if she be the one of whom those youths spoke? The name is rare."

"Hush! do not hint it! If harm reach her, I shall feel myself guilty of her fate."

"What, then? You only forsook her when you had wearied of her?"

"No: you mistake me. No man could weary of that exquisite life; and it is as soilless as it is fair. I meant but this.—I believe her young heart was mine, though no love-words passed between us; and I have doubted sometimes if my tardy mercy were not a cold and brutal cruelty. Because passion has no place in my own life, I forgot that regret could have any place in hers."

He spoke gravely, and his memory wandered from his listener away to that summer eve when some touch of the old soft folly had come back on him as his lips had met Castalia's,—away to the hours when the lustrous eloquence of her beaming eyes had reflected his thoughts, almost ere they had been uttered, in that pure and perfect sympathy without which love is but a toy of the senses, a plaything of the passions.

Beatrix Lennox looked at him long in silence.

"She *is* dear to you?"

"If I let her be so, it would be the sure signal for her loss to me."

Then bending his head to her in farewell, he went out into the dawn alone.

Beatrix Lennox stood in the dark and narrow entrance, watching him as he passed away in the twilight of the dawn, through which the yellow flicker of the street-lights was burning dully. Her black robes fell about her like the laces of the Spanish women; her face was very pale, for there was no bloom of art on its cheeks to-night, and her large eyes were suffused with tears over the darkness of their hazel gleam. There was beauty still in her,—the beauty of an autumn evening, that has the faded sadness of dead

hopes, and the tempest-clouds of past storms on its pale sunless skies and on the red fire of its fallen leaves.

"He loves her, or he will love," she murmured, in her solitude "I will seek out this child, and see if she be worthy of him. Ah no woman will be that! A great man's life lies higher than *our* love, loftier than *our* reach."

A few hours later, in the writing-cabinet of her Roman villa, a famous diplomatist sat,—one who wove her fine nets around all the body politic of the Continent, who schemed far away with Eastern questions and Western complications, who had her hand in Austria, her eyes on Syria, her whisper in the Vatican, her sceptre in the Tuileries, her allies among the Monsignori, her keys to all the *bureaux secrets*, her subtle, vivacious, deleterious, dangerous power everywhere.

She was a terrible power to her foes, a priceless power to her party. Those brilliant falcon eyes would pierce what a phalanx of ministers could not overcome; that unrivalled silver wit could consummate what conferences and coalitions failed to compass; that magical feminine subtlety could dupe, and mask, and net, and seduce, and wind, and unravel, and give a poison-drop of treachery in a crystal-clear sweetmeat of frankness and compliment, and join with both sides at once, and glide unharmed away, compromised with neither, as no male state-craft ever yet could do. The only mistake she made was that she thought the growth of the nations was to be pruned by an enamelled paper-knife, and the peoples that were struggling for liberty as drowning men for air, were to be bound helpless by the strings of Foreign Portfolios. But the error was not only hers; male state-craft has made it for ages.

Now it was of an idle thing she was speaking. One of her attendants stood before her, a slight, pale, velvet-voiced Greek, long in her service, and skilled in many tongues and many ways. He was reciting, with his finger on a little note-book, the heads of some trifling researches,—very trifling he thought them, he who was accustomed to be a great lady's political *mouchard*.

"Still wandering; close on Venetia; will soon want food; takes no alms; left Vallombrosa two months ago; is known only by the name of Castalia; parentage unknown; reared by the charity of the Church; supposed by the peasants to have fled to a stranger who spent the spring there in a villegiatura. That is all, madame."

She listened, then beat her jewelled fingers a little impatiently.

"That is not like your training,—to bring me an unfinished sketch."

"There is nothing to be learned, madame."

The amused scorn of his mistress's eyes flashed lightly over him.

"If a thing is on the surface, a blind man can feel it. Go; and tell me when you come back both the name of this stranger and the name of her mother."

"It is impossible, madame."

She gave a sign of her hand in dismissal.

"You must make impossibilities possible if you remain with me."

The voice was perfectly gentle, but inflexible. Her servant bowed and withdrew.

"I *will* know what she is to him," murmured Héloïse de la Vivarol.

The fair politician had not forgotten her oath.

Two weeks later, the Greek, who dared not reappear with his mission unaccomplished, sent his mistress, with profound apology for continued failure, a trifle that, by infinite patience and much difficulty, had been procured, with penitent confession of its theft, from a contadina of Fontane Amorose,—a trifle that had been taken from the dead, and secreted rather from superstitious belief in its holy power than from its value. It was a little, worn, thin, silver relic-case: on it was feebly scratched, by some unskilful hand, a name,—"Valeria Lulli."

CHAPTER VIII.

"RECORD ONE LOST SOUL MORE."

In his atelier, early in the next day, an artist stood painting. The garden was very tranquil below; and the light within shone on casts, antiques, bronzes, old armour, old cabinets, and half-completed sketches, all an artist's picturesque lumber. He had a fair fame, and, though not rich, could live in ease. He did not care for the gay Bohemianism of his brethren; he had never done so. A sensitive, imaginative man,—poet as well as painter,—of vivid feeling and secluded habits, he preferred solitude, and made companions of his own creations. He stood before one now, lovingly touching and retouching it,—a man with a rich Spanish beauty that would have been very noble, but for a look of wavering indecision and a startled, timorous, appealing glance too often in his eyes.

It was not there now; he was smiling down on his picture with a blissful content in its promise. It had the pure, clear, cool colour of the French school, with the luxuriance of an overflowing fancy less strictly educated, more abundantly loosened, than theirs; it was intensely idealic, far from all realism, withal voluptuous, yet never sensual. The type of his nature might be found in the picture; it was high, but it had scarcely strength enough in it to be the highest. Still, it was of a rare talent, a rare poetry, and he might well look on it contented; he only turned from it to smile more fondly even still in the face of a young girl who leaned her hands on his shoulder to look at it with him,—a girl with the glow in her laughing loveliness that was in the warm autumnal sunlight without, the loveliness rich and full of grace of a Spaniard of Mexico.

"You are happy, Agostino, with it and with me?"

"*Mi querida!* you and it give me all of happiness I ever know."

As he stood before his picture, in the peace of the early day, the door opened, a light quick step trod on the oak floor.

"Ah, *cher* Agostino! how go the world and the pictures? You and La Señora are a study for one!"

The painter started, with a sudden shiver that ran through all his limbs; a deadly pallor came under the warm olive tint of his cheek; he stood silent, like a stricken man. The Spanish girl, who had hurriedly moved from his embrace, with a blush over her face, did not see his agitation; she was looking shyly and in wonder at the stranger who entered so unceremoniously on their solitude.

"Haven't seen you for some time, my good Agostino," pursued Trevenna, walking straight up towards the easel, without taking the trouble to remove his hat from over his eyes or his cigar from between his lips. "What are you doing here?—anything pretty? Queer thing, Art, to be sure! Never did understand it,—never should. Let me see: a young lady without any drapery,—unless some ivy on her hair can be construed into a concession to society on that head,—and a general atmosphere about her of moist leaves and hazy uncomfortableness. Now you've 'idealised' her into something, I'll be bound, and will give her some sonorous Hellenic title, eh? That's always the way. An artist gives his porter's daughter five francs and a kiss to sit to him, dresses her up with some two-sous bunches of primroses from the Marché des Fleurs, paints her while they smoke bad tobacco and chatter *argot* together, and calls her the Genius of the Spring, or something as crack-jaw. Straightway the connoisseurs and critics go mad: it's an 'artistic foreshadowing of the divine in woman;' or it's an 'idealic representation of the morning of life and the budding renaissance of the earth;' or it's a 'fusion of many lights into one harmonious whole;' or it's some other art-jargon as nonsensical. And if you talk the trash, and stare at the nude 'Genius,' it's all right; but if you can't talk the trash, and like to look at the live grisette dancing a *rigolboche*, it's all wrong, and you're 'such a coarse fellow!' That's why I don't like Art; she's such a humbug. 'Idealism!' Why, it's only Realism washed out and vamped up with a little glossing, as the raw-boned, yellow-skinned ballet-hacks are dressed up in paint and spangles and gossamer petticoats and set floating about as fairies. 'Idealism!'—that's the science of seeing things as they aren't; that's all."

With which Trevenna, with his glass in his eye and his cigar in hi teeth, completed his lecture on Art, hitting truth in the bull's eye, as he commonly did, refreshing the Hudibrastic vein in him for his compulsory hypocrisies by a sparring-match with other people's humbugs. He lied because everybody lied, because it was politic, because it was necessary, because it was one of the weapons that cut a way up the steep and solid granite of national vanity and social conventionalities; but the man himself was too jovially cynical (if such an antithesis may be used) not to be naturally candid. He

would never have had for *his* crime the timorous conventional Ciceronian euphemism of *Vixerunt;* he would have come out from the Tullianum and told the people, with a laugh, that he'd killed Lentulus and the whole of that cursed set, because they were horribly in the way and were altogether a bad lot. He held his secret cards closer than any man living; but all the same he never pandered with his actions under specious names to himself, and he had by nature the "cynical frankness" of Sulla. Indeed, this would sometimes break out of him, and cleave the dull air of English politics with a rush that made its solemn respectabilities aghast,—though the mischief happened seldom, as Trevenna, like Jove, held his lightning in sure command, and was, moreover, the last man in the universe to risk an Icarus flight.

Meanwhile, as the great popular leader uttered his diatribe against Art, the painter had remained silent and passive, like a slave before his taskmaster. The girl had left them at a murmured word in Spanish from him, and they stood alone. Trevenna dropped himself into the painting-chair with his easy familiarity.

"You are not lively company, *cher* Agostino, nor yet a welcoming host," he resumed. "Didn't expect to see me, I dare say? I haven't much time to run about ateliers; still, as I was staying at the Court, I thought I'd give you a look. So you've married, eh? Very pretty creature, too, I dare say, for men who understand that style of thing; myself, I'm a better judge of a *bouillabaisse* than of a mistress. Married, eh? You know what Bacon says about marriage and hostages to fortune, don't you?"

The artist's dry lips opened without words; his eyelids were raised for a moment, with a piteous, hunted misery beneath them; he knew the meaning of the question put to him.

"Don't know very well what Bacon meant, myself," pursued Trevenna, beating a careless tattoo with the mahl-stick. "Wives and brats are hostages most men would be uncommonly glad to leave unredeemed, I fancy,—goods they wouldn't want to take out of pawn in a hurry, if they once got rid of 'em. So you've married? Well, I've no objection to that, if *you* see any fun in it: *I* shouldn't. You've learned one piece of wisdom: you never try dodging now. Quite right. Wherever you might go, *I* should know it."

The man who stood before him, like a slave whom the bloodhounds have run down and brought back to their bondage, shuddered as he heard.

"Oh, God!" he murmured, "can you not spare me yet? I am so nameless a thing in the world's sight, beside you! You have such vast schemes, such vast ambitions, so wide a repute, so broad a field: can you *never* forget me, and let me go?"

"*Cher* Agostino," returned the Right Honourable Member. "you are illogical. A thing may be insignificant, but it may be wanted. A pawn may, before now, have turned the scale of a champion game of chess. Take care of the trifles, and the big events will take care of themselves. That's my motto; though, of course, *you* don't understand this, seeing that your trade in life is to scatter broad splashes of colour and leave fancy to fill 'em up,—

to paint a beetle's back as if the universe hung in the pre-Raphaelism, and to trust to Providence that your daub of orange looks like a sunset,—to make believe, in a word, with a little pot of oil and a little heap of coloured earths, just for all the world as children play at sand-building, in the very oddest employment that ever a fantastic devil set the wits of a man after! You are unpractical, that's a matter of course; but you are more:—you are desperately ungrateful!"

A quiver of passion shook the artist's frame; the scarlet flood flushed the olive of his delicate cheek; he recoiled and rebelled against the tyranny that set its iron heel upon his neck, as years before the beautiful lad, whom the old Hebrew loved, had done so in the gloomy city den.

"Ungrateful! Are men grateful whose very life is not their own? Are men grateful who hourly draw their breath as a scourged dog's? Are men grateful who from their boyhood upward have had their whole future held in hostage as chastisement for one poverty-sown sin?—grateful for having their spirits broken, their souls accursed, their hearts fettered, their steps dogged, their sleep haunted, their manhood ruined? If they are grateful, so am I; not else."

Trevenna laughed good-humouredly.

"My good fellow, I always told you you ought to go on the stage: you'd make your fortune there. Such a speech as that, now,—all *à l'improviste*, too,—would bring down any house. Decidedly you've histrionic talents, Agostino; you'd be a second Talma. All your raving set apart, however (and you're not good at elocution, *très-cher;* who can 'fetter' hearts? who can 'break' spirits? It sounds just like some doggerel for a valentine), you *are* ungrateful. I might have sent you to the hulks, and didn't. My young Jew, you ought to be immeasurably my debtor."

He spoke quite pleasantly, beating a rataplan with the mahl-stick, and sitting crosswise on the painting-chair. He was never out of temper, and some there were who learned to dread that bright, sunny, insolent, mirthful good humour as they never dreaded the most fiery or the most sullen furies of other men. Even in the political arena, opponents had been taught that there was a fatal power in that cloudless and racy good temper, which never opened the slightest aperture for attack, but yet caught them so often and so terribly on the hip.

"Very ungrateful you are, my would-be Rubens," resumed Trevenna. "Only think! Here is a man who committed a downright felony, whom I could have put in a convict's chains any day I liked, and I did nothing to him but let him grow up, and turn artist, and live in the pleasantest city in the world, and marry when he fancied the folly, and do all he liked in the way he liked best; and he can't see that he owes me anything! Oh, the corruption of the human heart!"

With which Trevenna, having addressed the exposition to the Dryad on the easel, dealt her a little blow with the mahl-stick, and made a long cruel blur across the still moist paint of her beautiful

gravely-smiling mouth, that it had cost the painter so many hours, so many days, of loving labour to perfect.

Agostino gave an involuntary cry of anguish. He could have borne iron blows rained down on his own head like hail, better than he could bear that ruin of his work, that outrage to his darling.

"I do it in the interest of morality; she's too pretty and too sensual," laughed Trevenna, as he drew the instrument of torture down over the delicate brow and the long flowing tresses, making a blurred, blotted, beaten mass where the thing of beauty had glowed on the canvas. He would not have thought of it, but that the gleam of fear in his victim's eyes, as the stick had accidentally slanted towards the easel, had first told him the ruin he might make. To torment was a mischief and a merriment that he never could resist, strong as his self-control was in other things.

It was the one last straw that broke the long-suffering camel's back. With a cry as though some murderer's knife were at his own throat, the painter sprang forward and caught his tyrant's arm, wrenching the mahl-stick away, though not until it was too late to save his Dryad, not until the ruthless cruelty had done its pleasure of destruction.

"Merciful God!" he cried, passionately, "are you devil, not man? Sate yourself in my wretchedness; but, for pity's sake, spare my works, the only treasure and redemption of my weak, worthless, accursed life!"

Trevenna shrugged his shoulders, knocking his cigar-ash off against the marvellous clearness of limpid, bubbling, prismatic, sunlit water at the Dryad's feet, that had made one of the chief beauties and wonders of the picture.

"Agostino, *bon enfant*, you *should* go on the stage. You speak in strophes, and say 'good-day' to anybody like an Orestes seeing the Furies! It must be very exhausting to keep up that perpetual melo-dramatic height. Try life in shirt-sleeves and slippers; it's as pleasant again as life in the tragic toga. Be logical. What's to prevent my slashing that picture across right and left, with my pen-knife, if I like? Not you. You think your life 'weak and worthless;' far be it from me to disagree with you; but what you think you 'redeem' it in by painting young ladies *au naturel* from immoral models, putting some weed on their head and a pond at their feet, and calling it 'idealism,' I can't see: that's beyond me. However, I'm not an idealist: perhaps that's why."

With which he swayed himself back in the painting-chair, and prodded the picture all over with his cigar, leaving little blots of ash and sparks of fire on each spot. Martin and Gustave Doré are mere novices in the art of inventing tortures, beside the ingenuity of Trevenna's laughing humour.

The man he lectured thus stood silent by, paralysed, and quivering with an anguish that trembled in him from head to foot. Agostino had not changed; the yielding, timorous, sensitive nature, blending a vivid imagination with a woman's susceptibility to fear, was unaltered in him, and laid him utterly at the mercy of every

stronger temperament and sterner will, even when he was most roused to the evanescent fire of a futile rebellion.

"Oh, Heaven!" he moaned, passionately, "I thought you had forgotten me! I thought you had wearied of my misery, and would leave me in a little peace! You are so rich, so famous, so successful; you have had so many victims greater far than I; you stand so high in the world's sight. Can you *never* let one so poor and powerless as I go free?"

"Poor and powerless is a figure," said Trevenna, with a gesture of his cigar. "You *will* use such exaggerated language; your beggarly little nation always did, calling themselves the chosen of Heaven, when they were the dirtiest little lot of thieves going, and declaring now that they're waiting for their Messiah, while they're buying our old clothes, picking up our rags, and lying *au plaisir* in our police-courts! You aren't poor, *cher* Agostino, for a painter; and you're really doing well. Paris talks of your pictures, and the court likes your young ladies in ivy and nothing else. You're prosperous,—on my word, you are; but don't flatter yourself I shall ever forget you. I don't forget!"

He sent a puff of smoke into the air with those three words; in them he embodied the whole of his career, the key-note of his character, the pith and essence at once of his success and of his pitilessness.

A heavy, struggling sigh burst from his listener as he heard; it was the self-same contest that had taken place years previous in the lamp-lit den of the bill-discounting offices, the contest between weakness that suffered mortally, and power that unsparingly enjoyed The terrible bondage had enclosed Agostino's whole life; he felt at times that it would pursue him even beyond the grave.

"Is there no price I can pay at once?" he said, huskily, his voice broken as with physical pain,—"no task I can work out at a blow?—no tribute-money I can toil for, that, gained, will buy me peace?"

"As if I ever touched a sou of his earnings, or set him to paint my walls for nothing! Mercy! the ingratitude of the Hebrew race!" cried Trevenna, amusedly, to his cigar.

The black, sad, lustrous eyes of the Spanish Jew flashed with a momentary fire that had the longing in them, for the instant, to strike his tyrant down stone-dead.

"Take my money? No! You do not seek that, because it is a drop in the ocean beside all that you possess, all that you have robbed other men of so long! I make too little to tempt you, or you would have wrung it out of me. But you have done a million times worse. You have taken my youth, my hope, my spirit, my liberty, and killed them all. You have made a mockery of mercy, that you might hold me in a captivity worse than any slave's. You have made me afraid to love, lest what I love should be dragged beneath my shame. You have made me dread that she should bear me children, lest they be born to their father's fate. You have ruined all manhood in me, and made me weak and base

and terror-stricken as any cur that cringes before his master's whip. You have made me a poorer, lower, viler wretch than I could ever have been if the Law had taken its course on me, and beaten strength and endurance into me in my boyhood, by teaching me openly and unflinchingly the cost of crime, yet had left me some gate of freedom, some hope of redemption, some release to a liberated life when my term of chastisement should have been over, —left me all that *you* have denied me since the hour you first had me in your power, in a cruelty more horrible and more unending than the hardest punishment of justice ever could have been."

The torrent of words poured out in his rich and ringing voice, swifter and more eloquent the higher his revolt and the more vain his anguish grew. This was his nature to feel passionately, to rebel passionately, to lift up his appeal in just and glowing protestation, to recoil under his bondage suffering beyond all expression, but to do no more than this,—to be incapable of action, to be powerless for real and vital resistance, to spend all his strength in that agonised upbraiding, which he must have known to be as futile as for the breakers to fret themselves against the granite sea-wall.

Trevenna listened quietly, with a certain amusement. It was always uncommonly droll to him to see the struggles of weak natures; he knew they would recoil into his hand, passive and helpless agents, conquered by the sheer, unexpressed force of his own vigorous and practical temperament. Studies of character were always an amusement to him; he had a La-Bruyère-like taste for their analysis; the vastness of his knowledge of human nature did not prevent his relishing all its minutiæ. What the subjects of his study might suffer under it, was no more to him than what the frog suffers, when he pricks, flays, cuts, beheads, and lights a lucifer match under it, is to the man of science in his pursuit of anatomy and his refutation of Aristotle.

"Very well done! pity it's not at the Porte St. Martin. All bosh! Still, *that's* nothing against a bit of melodrama anywhere," he said, carelessly. "Shut up now, though, please. Let's go to business."

The artist seemed to shiver and collapse under the bright, brief words; the heart-sick passions, the flame of sudden rebellion, and the fire of vain recrimination faded off his face, his head sank, his lips trembled: just so, years before, had the vivid grace of his youth shrunk and withered under his taskmaster's eye.

"You paint the Princess Rossillio's portrait?" pursued his catechist.

Agostino bent his head.

"And go to her, of course, to take it?"

The Spanish Jew gave the same mute assent.

"Can't you speak? Don't keep on nodding there, like a mandarin in a tea-shop. You'd words enough just now. You paint it in her boudoir, don't you, because the light's best?"

Agostino lifted his heavy eyes.

"Since you know, why ask me?"

"Leave questions to me, and reply *tout bref*," said his interrogator, with a curt accent that bore abundant meaning. "You've seen a Russian cabinet that's on the right hand of the fire-place?"

"I have."

"Ah! you can answer sensibly at last! Well, that cabinet's madame's despatch-box. You know, or you may know, that she is the most meddlesome intriguer in Europe; but that's nothing to you. In the left-hand top drawer is her Austro-Venetian correspondence. Among it is a letter from the Vienna Nuncio. When you leave the boudoir to-day, you will know what that letter contains."

Agostino started; a dew broke out on his forehead, a flush stained his clear brown cheek with its burning shame; his eyes grew terribly piteous.

"More sin! more dishonour!" he muttered, in his throat. "Let me go and starve in the streets, rather than drive me to such deeds as these!"

Trevenna laughed, his pleasant *bonhomie* in no way changed, though there was a dash more of authority in his tone.

"Quiet, you Jew dog! Really, you do get too melodramatic to be amusing. There's no occasion for any heroics, but—you'll be able to tell me this time to-morrow."

The artist covered his face with his hands, and his form shook to and fro in an irrepressible agitation.

"Anything but this!—anything but this! Give me what labour you will, what poverty, what shame; but not this! I can never look in peace into my darling's eyes, if I take this villany upon my life!"

"Nobody's alluding to villany," said Trevenna, with a tranquil brevity. "As to your darling's eyes, they're nothing to anybody except yourself. If the only men who 'look into' women's eyes are the honest ones, the fair sex must get uncommon few lovers. You've heard what I said. Know what the letter's about. I don't tell you *how* you're to know it. Get the princess to show it you. You're a very handsome fellow,—black curls and all the rest of it,—and her Highness is a connoisseur in masculine charms."

With which Trevenna laughed, and got up out of the depths of the painting-chair.

Agostino stood in his path, a deep-red flush on his forehead, the blaze of freshly-lightened rebellion in his eyes.

"You use your power over me to force me to such things in your service as this! What if they were spoken? what if they were cited against you? You, high as you are in your success and your wealth and your rank, would be thought lower yet than *I* have ever fallen. Do you not fear, even *you*, that one day you may sting and goad me too far, and I may give myself up to your worst work for the sake of obtaining my vengeance?"

Trevenna smiled, with a certain laughing good-tempered indulgence, such as a man may extend to a child who menaces him with its impotent fury.

"*Très-cher, who would believe you?* Say anything you like; it's

nothing to me. I have a little bit of paper by me that, once upon a time, M. Agostina Mathias signed with a name not his own. I was very lenient to him; and if he doesn't appreciate the clemency the world will, and think him an ungrateful young Hebrew cur, who turns, like all curs, on his benefactor. Prosecute you now it wouldn't, perhaps, since the matter's been allowed to sleep: but criminate you and disgrace you it would most decidedly. You'd be hounded out all over Europe; and for your pretty Spaniard, I heard a Court Chamberlain admiring her yesterday, and saying she was too good for an atelier:—she'd soon be his mistress, when she knew you a felon. Ah, my poor Agostina, when you once broke the law, you put your head into a steel-trap you'll never draw it out of again. Only fools break the laws. Excuse the personality!"

Under the ruthless words of truth Agostino shrank and cowered again, like a beaten hound; he had no strength against his task-master,—he never could have had: he was hemmed in beyond escape. Moreover, now he had another and a yet more irresistible rein by which to be held in and coerced,—the love that he bore, and that he received from, his young wife.

"You'll do that, then?" said Trevenna, with the carelessness of a matter of course. "Bring some picture to show me to-morrow morning,—Darshampton likes pictures, because it couldn't tell a sixpenny daub from a Salvator Rosa,—and remember every line of the Nuncio's letter. You understand? I don't want to hear your means; I only want the results."

"I will try," muttered Agostino. He loathed crime and dishonour with an unutterable hatred of it; he longed, he strove, to keep the roads of right and justice; his nature was one that loved the peace of virtue and the daylight of fair dealing. Yet, by his unconquerable fear, by his wax-like mobility of temper, by his past sin, and by his future dread, he was forced into the very paths and made the very thing that he abhorred.

"People who 'try' aren't my people," said the member for Darshampton, curtly. "Those who *do* are the only ones that suit me."

Agostino shrank under his eye.

"I will come to you to-morrow," he murmured, faintly. He had no thought, not the slightest, of how he should be able to accomplish this sinister work that was set him; but he knew that he must do it, as surely as his countrymen of old must make their bricks without straw, for their conquerors and enslavers.

Trevenna nodded, and threw down his mahl-stick with a final lunge at the Dryad.

"All right! of course you will. You ought to be very grateful to me that I let you off so easily. Some men would make you give up to them that charming Spanish Señora of yours, as Maurice de Saxe took Favart's wife *de la part du roi*. But that isn't my line. I've coveted a good many things in my day, but I never coveted a woman."

With which he threw his smoked-out cigar away, and went

across the atelier and out at the door, with a careless nod to his victim. He had so much to fill up every moment of his time, that he could ill spare the ten minutes he had flung away in the amusement of racking and tormenting the helplessness of the man he tortured, and he knew that he would be obeyed as surely as though he spent the whole day in further threats.

Trevenna had two especial arts of governing at his fingers' ends: he never, by any chance, compromised himself, but also he never was, by any hazard, disobeyed. He had a large army of *employés* on more or less secret service about in the world; but as there was not one of them who held a single trifle that could damage him, so there was not one of them who ever ventured not to "come up to time" exactly to his bidding, or to fail to keep his counsel with *silence à la mort*.

The artist Agostino, left to his solitude, threw himself forward against the broad rest of the chair, his arms flung across it, his head bent down on them: he could not bear to look upon the defaced canvas of his treasured picture; he could not bear to see the light of the young day, while he knew himself a tool so worthless and so vile. He might have been so happy! and this chain was for ever weighting his limbs, eating into his flesh, dragging him back as he sought a purer life, waking him from his sleep with its chill touch, holding him ever to his master's will and to his master's work,—will and work that left him free and unnoticed perhaps for years, and then, when he had begun to breathe at liberty and to hope for peace, would find him out wherever he was, and force him to the path they pointed!

Agostino had hoped oftentimes that as his bond-ruler rose in the honour of men and the success of the world, he would forget so nameless and so powerless a life as his own: he had found his hope a piteous error. Trevenna had said truly he never forgot; the smallest weapon that might be ready to his hand some day he kept continually finely polished and within his reach. The painter knew that he must learn what was indicated to him,—by betrayal, or chicanery, or secret violence, or whatsoever means might open to him,—or be blasted for life by one word of his tyrant. He abhorred the dishonour, but he had not courage to refuse it, knowing the cost of such refusal. It was not the first time by many that such missions had been bound on him: yet every time they brought fresh horror and fresh hatred with them. But he was hunted and helpless; he had no resistance; throughout his life he had paid the price exacted, rather than meet the fate that waited him if it were unpaid. He clung to the sweetness, the tranquillity, the growing renown, and the newly-won love of his existence; he clung to them, even embittered by the serpent's trail that was over them, with a force that made him embrace any alternative rather than see them perish, that laid him abjectly at the mercy of the one who menaced them.

Lost in his thoughts, he did not hear the footfall of the Spanish girl as she re-entered the atelier. She paused a moment, amazed and terrified, as she saw his attitude of prostrate grief and

dejection, then threw herself beside him with endearing words and tearful caresses, in wonder at what ailed him. He raised himself and unwound her arms from about him, shunning the gaze of her eyes. She thought him as true, as loyal-hearted, as great, as he knew himself to be weak and criminal and hopelessly enslaved.

"What is it? What has happened?" she asked him eagerly, trying to draw down his face to hers.

He smiled, while the tears started woman-like beneath his lashes. He led her gently towards the ruined canvas.

"Only that;—an accident, my love!"

The brightness of the Dryad all blurred and marred by the ruthlessness of tyranny was a fit emblem of his life.

By noon that day, in the boudoir of the Italian princess, all glimmering with a soft glisten of azure and silver through its rose-hued twilight, he chanced to be left for a few moments in solitude. Her Highness had not yet risen.

"O God!" he thought, "*do* devils rule the world? There are always doors opened so wide for any meditated sin!"

Then, with a glance round him like a thief in the night, his hand was pressed on the spring of the Russian cabinet; the letter of the Nuncio lay uppermost, with its signature folded foremost; a moment, and its delicate feminine writing was scanned, and each line remembered with a hot and terrible eagerness that made it graven as though bitten in by aquafortis on his memory. The note was put back, the drawer closed; the artist stood bending over his palette, and pouring the oil on some fair carmine tints, when the Princess of Naples swept into the chamber.

She greeted him with a kindly, careless grace, with a pleasant smile in the brown radiance of her eyes; and she saw that his cheek turned pale, that his eyelids drooped, that his voice quivered, as he answered her.

"*Povero! com' è bello!*" thought Irene Rossillio; and she laughed a little, as she thought that even this Spanish Jew of a painter could not come into her presence without succumbing to its spell.

BOOK THE EIGHTH.

CHAPTER I.

THE CLAIMANT OF THE PORPHYRY CHAMBER.

BEFORE the door of an Italian albergo, some men had been drinking and laughing in the ruddy light of an autumn day, just upon the setting of the sun,—men of the mountains, shepherds, goatherds, and one or two of less peaceable and harmless callings,—rough comrades for a belated night on the hill-side, whose argument was powder and ball, and whose lair was made with the wolves and the hares. The house, low, lonely, poor, was overhung with the festoons of vines, and higher yet with the great shelf of roadside rock, from which there poured down, so close that the wooden loggia was often splashed with its spray, a tumbling, foaming, brown glory of water that rolled hissing into a pool dark as night, turning as it went the broad black wood of a mighty mill-wheel. The men had been carousing carelessly, and shouting over their wine and brandy snatches of muleteer and boat-song, or the wild ribaldry of some barcarolle, their host drinking and singing with them, for the vintage had been good, and things went well with him in his own way, here out of the track of cities, and in the solitude of great stretches of sear sunburnt grass, of dense chestnut-forest, of hills all purple and cloud-topped in the vast, clear, dream-like distance. Now, flushed with their drink and heedless in their revels, rough and tumultuous as wild boors at play, they were circled round the doorway in a ring that shut out alike all passage to the osteria and all passage to the road; and they were enjoying torture with that strange instinctive zest for it that underlies most human nature, and breaks out alike in the boor who has a badger at his mercy and the Cæsar who has a nation under his foot.

They had the power and they had the temptation to torment, and the animal natures in them, hot with wine and riotous with mirth rather than with any colder cruelty, urged them on in it; one or two of them, also, were of tempers as coarse and as savage as any of the brutes that they hunted, and peals of brutal laughter rang out from them on the sunny autumn air.

"Sing, my white-throated bird!" cried one. "Dance a measure with me!" cried another. "Pour this down your pretty lips, and kiss us for it!" "You'll be humble enough before we've done

with you, my proud beauty!" "We'll tie you up by a rope of that handsome bright hair!" "Come, now, laugh and take it easy, or, by Bacchus, we'll smash those dainty limbs of yours like maize-stalks!"

The shouts echoed in tumult, ringing with laughter, and broken with oaths, and larded with viler words of mountain-slang, that had no sense to the ear on which they were flung in their polluting mirth. In the centre of the ferocious revelry, beneath the bronzed and crimson canopy of the hanging porch-vine, and with the western light shed full upon her, stood Castalia. The tall, lithe, voluptuous grace of her form rose out against the darkness of the entrance-way like the slender, lofty height of a young palm; the masses of her hair swept backward from her forehead. Her face was white as death to the lips; an unutterable horror was on it, but no yielding fear; it was proud, dauntless, heroic with the spirit that rose higher with every menace. Her eyes looked steadily at the savage, flushed faces round her, so coarse, so loathsome in their mirth; her hands were folded on her bosom, holding to it the book she carried. They might tear her limb from limb, as they threatened, like the fibres of the maize; but the royal courage in her would never bend down to their will. They had hemmed her in by sheer brute strength, and their clamour of hideous jest, their riot of insolent admiration, were a torture to her, passing all torture of steel or of flame; but they could not wring one moan from her, much less could they wring one supplication.

"*Altro!*" laughed the foremost, a sunburnt colossal mountain-thief of the Appenine. "Waste no more parley with her. If she will not smile for fair words, she shall squeak for rough ones. My pretty princess, give me the first kiss of those handsome lips of yours!"

He launched himself on her as he spoke, his hand on the gold of her hair and the linen broideries of her delicate vest; but her eyes had watched his movement: with a shudder like the antelope's under the tiger's claws, she wrenched herself from him, pierced the circle of her torturers before they could stay her, and, before they could note what she did, had sprung with the mountain swiftness of her childhood on to the rocks overhanging the water-wheel. Another bound in mid-air, light and far-reaching as a chamois's, and she stood on the broad wooden ledge of the wheel itself, that was stopped from work and was motionless in the torrent, with the foam of the spray flung upward around her, and the black pool hissing below. A yell of baffled rage broke from her tormentors; yet they were checked and paralysed at the daring of the action and at the beauty of her posture, as she was poised there on the wet ledge of the wheel-timber, her hair floating backward, her eyes flashing down upon them, her hands still holding the book, the roar and the surge of the torrent beneath her moving her no more to fear than they move the chamois that spring from rock to rock. They forgot their passions and their

fury for the moment in amaze and in admiration, wrung out from them by a temper that awed them the more because they could comprehend it in nothing.

"Come down!" they shouted, with one voice; "come down! You have gone to your death!"

Where she stood on the wood-work, with the water splashing her feet and the boiling chasm yawning below, she glanced at them and smiled.

"Yes; I have that refuge from you."

"*Per fede!*" thundered the mountaineer who had first menaced her, "there are two can play at that game, my young fawn!"

With a leap, quick and savage as his own rage, he sprang on to the shelf of rock. There was only the breadth of the falling water between them; she had cleared it, so could he. She looked at the pool, cavernous and deep, at her feet, then let her eyes rest on him calmly.

"Do it, if you dare!" she said, briefly; and her gaze went backward to the torrent with a dreaming, longing, wistful tenderness. "You will save me!" she murmured to the water. "There is only one pain in dying,—to leave the world that has *his* life."

She swayed herself lightly, balancing herself to spring with unerring measure where the eddy of the torrent was deepest. Arresting her in the leap, and startling her persecutors, a voice, deep and rich, though hollow with age, fell on the silence.

"Wait! Will you be murderers?"

Out of the darkness of the entrance issued the tall, bent, wasted form of the blind Hebrew, majestic as a statue of Moses, with his hands outstretched, and his sightless eyes seeking the sunlight.

"I am blind," he said, slowly; "but I know that wrong is being done. Maiden, whoever you be, do not fear; come to me; and the curse of the God of the guiltless fall on those who would seek to harm you!"

The men, stilled though sullen, riotous rather than coldly cruel, stood silent and wavering, glancing from her, where she was poised amidst the dusky mist of the foam-smoke, to the austere and solemn form of the old man suddenly confronting them: they were shamed by his rebuke; they were awed by her courage; they hung like sheep together.

"Take care!" murmured the host, who was alarmed, and wished the scene ended. "Let her go. The Jew has the evil eye."

A faint smile flitted over the withered, saturnine face of the Israelite.

"Yes," he answered, with a bitterness that under the turn of the words was acrid with remorse,—"yes, I have the evil eye. Many souls have been cursed by me; many men have wished that their mothers had never borne them when once I have looked on their faces; many lives, that were goodly as the young bay-tree ere I saw them, withered and fell under my glance. Let

the maiden come in peace to me; and go, or worse will happen unto you."

The subtlety of the Hebrew turned to just account the boorish and superstitious terrors of the men: they slunk together in awe of him.

"It was only play," they muttered: "we meant no harm."

The blackness of the stern sightless eyes that were turned on them filled them with terror; they crossed themselves, and wished the earth would hide them from his poison-dealing glance. Castalia, where she stood, watched him with that meditative, far-reaching gaze that had all the grave innocence of a child, all the luminous insight of a poet. She held her perilous station still high above on the plank of the wet mill-wheel, with the white steam of the torrent curling round.

With the instinct of the blind, Ignatius Mathias turned towards her.

"Come down, my child: I will have care of you."

"I will come when they have left."

The Jew turned to them with a gesture majestic as any prophet's command.

"You hear her; go!"

With sullen, muttered oaths, snarling like dogs baffled of a bone, the mountaineers slunk from him into the osteria, to drown their wrath and quench their superstitious fears in some fresh skins of wine. Then he lifted his eyes to the place where he knew that she was, and where the rushing of the torrent told him her danger.

"I cannot aid you; I have no sight; but you will trust me!"

She looked at him a moment longer, then, with the deer-like elasticity and surety of her mountain training, sprang once more across the width of the falling stream, and down the stone ledges, slippery with the moisture and holding scarce footing for a lizard, and came to him.

"Yes, I will trust you. I thank you very greatly."

He raised his hand, and touched her hair.

"I cannot see you. Your voice is sweet, and sounds very young; but it is proud. It is not the voice of a wanderer; it speaks as though it ought to command. What are you?"

"Very friendless."

"Truly. Are you far from your home?"

"Very far."

"And why have you left it?"

"Partly, because they said unjust evil."

"Of you?"

"Of me and of one other. I would not stay where the false speakers dwelt."

"You had better have sought the refuge beneath the water, then; you will find no footing to your taste on earth. Are you alone, wholly alone?"

"Yes."

"Ah! and are still but a child, by the clearness of your voice. To-day is but a sample of the dangers that lie in wait for you: the lions will not let such a fawn go by in peace."

"There is always death."

"Not always. And where is it you are bound now?"

"I want to go to large cities."

"To go to the lion's den at once, then. Large cities! And for you, who chose the risk of your grave rather than a rough caress from these men of the hills? Do you know what cities are?"

"No; but I must go to them." Her hands pressed the book closer; she thought that in cities alone could she see or hear what she sought.

The austere, worn, darkened face of the Hebrew grew gentler; she moved his pity, all pitiless though he had been; she recalled to him the youth of his dead darling, when, far away in the buried past, his heart had beat and his life had loved in the summer glories of the sierras. He was very old, but that memory lived still.

"And do you know the way to any cities?"

"Not at all."

"How do you guide yourself, then?"

"By chance."

"And chance plays you cruel caprices, my homeless bird! What chance was it led you to those men?"

She shuddered; but the passionate blood that ran in her, flushed her cheek and glowed imperially in her eyes.

"They were boors, and had boors' barbarity! I asked my way, and wanted a little bread, if they would sell it me at the osteria; and, before I could see them, those men were round me, bidding me laugh and dance and sing."

"Mayhap if you had done so you would have put them in good humour."

He was blind, and could not see the look that glanced on him from the dark shadows of her lashes.

"*I!*—beg their sufferance, by obeying their bidding, by amusing their idleness like any strolling tambourine-singer? They should have killed me first!"

"Verily, you should have emperors' blood in you! You well-nigh killed yourself to escape them."

"Well, what else was there to do? Men can avenge themselves; women can only die."

He bent his eyes on her as though, sightless as they were, he would fain read her features.

"You have grand creeds. Who taught them?"

"They are not creeds, I think; they are instincts."

"Only in rare natures. But have you none in all the world to shield you from such risks?"

"None. But I can shield myself."

"How do you live, then?"

"I have sold the flowers, and sung an office here and there. God is always good."

The tears welled slowly into her eyes. She would not say what she had suffered.

"But why is it that you wander thus? You can come of no peasant blood?"

She was silent. She could not have spoken of the thoughts that lay at her heart,—of the goal that made her search for the sake of life itself. The words which had been said to her in the Italian town had wakened shame and frozen her to silence, though neither her purpose nor her will faltered.

"What has sent you out alone? Have any done you wrong?"

"Only they who spoke evil unjustly."

"If you hold *that* a wrong, do not come into cities. But you speak faintly. Have you broken your fast?"

"Not to-day."

She spoke very low; she could not lie, but she could not bear to say the truth,—that she had eaten but a little milk and millet-bread in the past twenty-four hours. She had intense strength to endure, and she had too much pride to complain, though a faint weakness was on her, and her limbs seemed weighted with lead in the aching exhaustion that comes from want of food. His sightless eyes sought her with a grave compassion; the self-restraint and force of endurance touched the iron mould of his nature as softer things might not have done.

"Well, see here. I am poor, but I am a little wealthier than you. I go to cities where my people are good. I am very aged; but still I can give you some guidance, some shield, at least from insult. Come with me."

"No. It is a gentle charity; but I cannot take charity."

"Whoever you are, you should be the daughter of kings! Listen. You are but a child, and I claim the title of age. I am blind, as you see; I am solitary, I have no companion save only my little dog; you can aid me in much. Lend me your sight, and I will lend you my counsel. It will be quittance of all debt between us. I go to Venice; come there, and from there you can do what you will."

"To Venice!"

Her eyes lightened; it was the city of which she had heard most from him whom she sought,—the city whence Chandos had come into the beech-woods below Vallombrosa.

"Yes," answered the Jew. "One is gone thither whom I follow. Your eyes will be fair friends to me; let me have their companionship on the road, at least."

She wavered. The longing on her was great to reach Venice. She thought that there the silence that reigned between her and the life she had lost might be broken.

"Shall it be so?" he asked her.

"If it will not weary you."

"That is well! Who should serve each other, if not the desolate? And yet I spoke not altogether wrongly when I told those ruffians that I had the evil eye. Not in the sense of their fools' superstitions, but my eyes *have* been evil; sight has been

blasted from them in a just judgment. My life has been long, and cruel, and darkly stained. You have no fear of me?"

She looked at him with a musing, lingering gaze. The face she saw was stern and harsh and ploughed with deep lines; but she read its true meaning aright.

"No," she said, simply; "I have no fear."

The brown, furrowed brow of the old man cleared. Because he had forfeited the right to trust, trust was the sweeter to him.

"So!—that is right. Youth without faith is a day without sun. Yours will not be wronged by me. Wait a while, then; I need food, and they shall bring you some grapes. Your hands are hot. When I have fairly rested, we will begin to travel onward. Guide me to the shade. Are there no trees? There; let us stay there. Have no fear; your persecutors will not return."

So they rested beneath the gold-flecked boughs of a broad sycamore that grew beside the pool of the water-mill, with the depth of shadow flung on the white Syrian head of the old man, and the deep space of the eddying stream, and the sun through the leaves lighting on the grace of her young limbs and the musing beauty of her eyes, as, where the book of "Lucrèce" lay open on the grass, they dwelt on the words that Castalia knew by heart as a child knows his earliest prayers,—that had never spoken to any as they spoke to her,—that were richer in her sight than all the gold of the world, and were to her as in Oriental ages the scroll that their prophets and kings had traced were in the sight of the people's awed love and listening reverence.

"It was not true to say I was alone," she mused; "not alone while his thoughts are with me."

And in them solitude, and danger, and the gnawing of famine, and the heart-sickness of her young life, cast adrift on the fever and the wilderness of the world, were alike forgotten where she leaned, in the autumn light, beside the only man among his creditors who had not uncovered his head before the dignity of calamity in the porphyry hall of Clarencieux.

CHAPTER II.

"MAGISTER DE VIVIS LAPIDIBUS."

UNDER the great smoke pall that overhung Darshampton there were riots,—riots of the eternal conflict which has been waged since the Gracchan Proletariate, and will be waged on, God knows how long, through the cycles of the future. Prices were high; trades were bad; political ignorance was run mad, catching half-truths and whole wrongs as it went, but braying of them so that the sane were fain to stop their ears, in the same blunder as the burrowing ostrich makes. Workers had struck almost to a man; masters would not or could not yield; there were misery, error,

wild justice, blind injustice, crippled creeds groping in twilight, wrong codes hunger-sharpened, right premisses and wrong deductions, the *ignoratio elenchi* of individual suffering, that thought itself an injured world, the passion of starving lives that persuaded themselves want of bread was resistless logic; all the eternal antagonisms of Labour and Capital were camped here as it were on one common battle-ground, with the angry smoke looming above their hostile battalions.

The mighty-sinewed iron-workers, like the Moyen-Age smiths of Antwerp and Bruges, the pale delicate artisans of the loom, wan and frail as the flax they wove, the gaunt giants of the blasting-furnaces, and the sickly weavers of fine linens, the men poisoned with stifling air, the men scorched with foundry flames, the men dying of steel-dust in their lungs, the men livid with phosphorus-flames inhaled to get daily bread, the men who died like so many shoals of netted herrings, that the Juggernaut of trade might roll on,—all these were here, or their representatives, men who were told, and believed it, that it was the Aristocratic Order which wronged them, never thinking that it was the merciless Thor of Commercial Cupidity which crushed them under its sledge-hammer, beating gold out of their bruised flesh. All these were here, filling the vast squares and the dark streets with clamour and menace and sullen ominous murmur,—the volcanic lava which runs beneath the fair surface of the careless world, which soon or late will break from bondage and overflow it—to fertilize or to destroy?

To fertilize, if light be given them; to destroy, if darkness be locked in on them.

The thirst for liberty was in them,—the liberty that the sons of men knew while yet the earth was in her youth,—the liberty of pathless woods, of trackless seas, of wild fresh winds, of free unfettered life. They wanted it, though they had never known it. These—who from the birth to the grave were pent in factories, and sheds, and garrets, in gas-glare, and crowded alleys, and dens of squalid vice, with the whirr of machines ever on their ear, and the dead weight of smoke ever in their breath, wanted life,—wanted the sweet west winds they never breathed, the strong ocean air they never tasted, the waving seas of grass they never looked on, the unchained liberty of boundless moorland they had never seen but in their dreams, the human heritage of freedom that in all ages through is taken from the poor in price for the scant barren porridge of daily sustenance. Ah, God! it is a bitter price to pay,—a whole life given up for food enough to keep alive in knowledge that life is endless pain and endless deprivation!

They wanted this grand simple freedom that instinct made them pine for, though its knowledge had never been theirs or their sires'; —and their teachers told them they needed the ballot-box and the game-laws' repeal!

It is many centuries since Caius Gracchus called the Mercantile Classes to aid the people against the Patricians, and found too late that they were deadlier oppressors than all the Optimates; but the

error still goes on, and the Money-makers still churn it into gold, as they churned it then into the Asiatic revenues and the senatorial amulets.

The trades had struck. They were wrong, very wrong, in the application of theories and predicates which had their root in right. But it were hard not to be wrong in philosophies when the body starves on a pinch of oatmeal, with the whole width of the known world drawn in between the four pent walls of a factory-room or the red-hot stones of a smelting-house. It is the law of necessity, the balance of economy: human fuel must be used up, that the machine of the world may spin on; but it is not perhaps marvellous that the living fuel is sometimes unreconciled to that symmetrical rule of waste and repair, of consumer and consumed.

They were sullenly angry, tempestuously bitter, these surging tumultuous masses, now raging like seas in a storm, now more ominously silent, with the yellow sickly gleam of the pale sun shining through the reeking fog on to their faces, here so white and eager and emaciated, there so black and dogged and bull-dog like, here so gaunt with old age of hungered patience, there so terrible with youth of vicious desperation. They were at war with all the world in the aching of their hearts, in the dimness of their insight; at war even with their darling whom they had so often crowned, their hero whom they had long been content to follow as hounds follow their feeder.

They were riotous and desperate. The furnaces had long been cold, the looms had long been idle, the wheels had long been silent throughout their country; their own Unions had been hard on them, and there were dark tales afoot of what had been done on renegades in the Unions' name. Their employers would not yield, and it was said that strange hands were pouring in and taking the work they had left,—taking it at peril of answering with life and limb for the temerity. They were very bitter, very savage, very maddened, in the nauseous fog-mist steaming round them, in the cold northerly cutting air, burdened black with smoke, though through them the chimneys had so long been without warmth. They were fierce in their wrath; their hearths were fireless, their children had no food, their women were dying of fever, their old people lay dead by the score of famine; their hand was against every man's, and they clamoured even against their Representative. He was faithless to them, he was untrue to his pledges; he feasted in foreign palaces, and forgot them; he sold them for the sake of office; he grew great himself, and let them perish; he joined the ministry, and denied all that he had said to them. Thus they murmured, and yelled, and hooted against him, in their restless misery. The love of a People is the most sublime crown that can rest on the brow of any man; but the love of a Mob is a mongrel that fawns and slavers one moment to rend and tear the next, sycophant whilst bones are tossed to it, savage when once not surfeited.

They loved him with a bold, rough love, that was a million-fold truer than his own heart ever had been; they were proud of him;

they would have died for him; they believed in him; but, irritated against him, they were capable of killing their god, and weeping over it, when shattered, like Africans. Imprecations even on him were hurled at intervals through the city, while the crash of falling slates, of shivered glass, of flung stones, of levelled bricks, was added to the hurricane of noise, where, clamorous for bread, or incensed at the stranger-hands hired by their employers, the mob wrecked a provision-shop or tore down a machine-house. It was a pandemonium under the dark murky atmosphere; in the dull glare cast from the westward flames, where some had fired a factory; in the midst of thousands let loose and made savage with hunger; in the storm of curses thundered out from the bared hollow chests gnawed with want,—curses that blasted even their idol's name. He had sold them for the bribe of office; he had betrayed them for the possession of power; he had gone over to their oppressors for the sake of his own aggrandizement!

Perhaps it was but a multitude's reaction and caprice; perhaps it was that the great, weary, fettered heart of the people, earnest with all its tyrannous error, and tossed by demagogues from lie to lie, vaguely felt that its own living, aching humanity was but used as a stepping-stone for ambition,—vaguely felt that what it trusted was not true! Be it which it would, they upbraided and menaced and cursed him. He was theirs, and he coalesced with the nobles; he was theirs, and he went to banquet in palaces; he was theirs, and he was betraying them to sit in the Cabinet Council and to wear the gewgaws of honours!

The murmur and the threat rose louder and louder, stretched wider and wider. When the tempest was at its height, into the surging waves of the stormy human sea Trevenna rode leisurely down.

Staying at the country-seat of a millionaire some ten miles away, whither rumours came with every hour of the Darshampton riots, he had heard how his subjects had mutinied against him,—heard as he was shooting over a pheasant-cover that had been specially reserved for him, with sundry other good shots of the nobility of rank and the princes of the plutocracy. He had given his gun to a loader, without a second's hesitation, and ordered a horse to be saddled. His friends had crowded round him, and sought to dissuade him; he had shrugged his shoulders. "They curse me behind my back; let's see what they'll dare say to my face." There was no bravado in it; but there was the cool audacity, the dauntless zest in peril, which made him, despite all his self-love and caution, bold in a fray as a mastiff; his teeth clenched, his hand gripped a riding-switch with a meaning force: the lion-tamer had no thought of leaving his lion-whelps to riot unchecked; and he rode now into Darshampton, with the gentlemen who were his hosts and fellow-guests, about him like a *cohue* of courtiers round a king.

"It is very unwise to risk it," whispered one of them. "They are at wild work, and your life is of national value."

Trevenna laughed, and bowed his thanks for the compliment.

"Nobody's life's of value, my dear lord: there are always plenty to fill the vacancies. There aren't two people whose death would lower the Consols for two days. To affect the money-market is the acme of greatness: I'm afraid the exchanges would scarce stay twelve hours below par for me yet."

And he rode leisurely down, as he would take his morning canter along the park, into that sea of turbulent, hooting, swaying, sullen, fog-soaked human life that, for the first moment since his clarion-words had challenged Darshampton, were angered against him and upbraiding him as a renegade. There was laughter in his eyes as they glanced over the heaving mass. To his worldly wisdom and bright sagacity, there was an irresistible comedy in this passionate, raving, undoubting sincerity of a hungry multitude; there was an inexpressible ridicule for him in these poor purblind tools that rushed with such ardour to do his work for him, thinking all the while they were doing their own,—never knowing that they but tunnelled the way, or threw the bridge, by which he would pass to his ambitions, while they would lie gasping, kicked aside and unknown. To his shrewd common sense there was something unutterably droll in the sight of men in love with an idea, amorous of a principle, sincere in anything except self-love; there was something unutterably ludicrous in the notion of men who starved for lack of a crust crazing their heads about the world's government. Trevenna was a democrat, because he hated everything about him, delighted to lead, and held a bitter grudge against the pestilential tyranny of class; but at heart he cared not a button more for the people than the most supercilious of aristocrats, and, had he been given a supreme power, would have been as strong a tyrant in his own way as ever made a nation the mill-horse to grind for his treasuries and fill his granaries. He had a thorough, manly, passionate contempt for the differences of rank; but all the same his one motive was simply to get rank for himself, and such a sentimentality (as he would have called it) as pity for the suffering of multitudes could never enter into the strong, practical astuteness of his sagacious temper.

But bold he was, bold as a lion, and more politic even than bold: so he rode now down into the close-wedged ranks of the crowds, into the sulphurous heat from the distant flames, into the clamour and the uproar and the storm of rage, till his horse could push way no more, and he faced the whole front of those who were clamorous against him, with the dull red light shining full on the keen brave blue of his eyes.

They were amazed to see his apparition rise there so suddenly out of the cloud of smoke and fog: he was their idol, moreover, though they had cursed him when they had no bread, as men beat the god Pan when he sent them no game for the hunting; and a silence fell for a moment on them: in it he spoke:—

"So, fellows, you are damning me, they say. Tell me my faults to my face, then!"

There was the familiar, half-brusque, half-bantering tone that

was so popular with the throngs he challenged; but beneath that there was something of the grand insolence of Scipio Æmilianus:—"Surely you do not think I shall fear those free whom I sent in chains to the slave-market!"

"You sold us for office!" "You have broken your pledges!" "You have been false to your promises!" "You have abandoned Reform!" "You have been bribed by Courts!" "You have recanted your creeds!" "You have joined the aristocracy!" "You have feasted in palaces!" "You have turned traitor!" "You only seek your own dignities, and leave us to starve!" Sullen, hoarse, savage with uncouth oaths, yelled out in the northern accent, the charges were hurled against him. The multitude were waking, in their irritation, to the truth, and vaguely feeling their way to it,—vaguely feeling that they were only used by the idol whom they had hugged the belief they had created and could dethrone.

He heard them quite patiently, his bold frank eyes resting on them with a certain insolent amusement that lashed them like cords: it was the amusement of the lion-tamer who lets his mutinous cubs fret and fume beneath his gaze, knowing that a crack of his whip will break them into obedience.

He laughed a little.

"You rebuke me for taking office? Why did you re-elect me after my acceptance of it, then?"

The mob, indignant to have their own inconsistency and mutability brought in their teeth against them, broke out into tenfold uproar; shrieks, curses, yells, hooting, menaces, crossed each other in horrible tumult; a shower of stones was hurled through the darkened air, a thousand hands struck out with massive iron weapons or cleft the mist with flaming fire-brands. His horse reared and fretted, while the masses of half-naked figures were jammed and crushed against its flanks; a thousand arms were stretched out, brawny and terrible in their threats, ten thousand voices thundered imprecations, hungry savage eyes glared on him like wild beasts', hot breath panted on him from mouths foul with curses and livid with famine. Trevenna sat firm as a rock, with the fresh sanguine colour in his face unblenched, and his eyes watching the riot as though it were an opera ballet. Had Trevenna been Napoleon, he would have won at Waterloo ere Blucher could turn the day, or else would have died with the Old Guard.

The missiles of iron, and stone, and lead, and wood, and slate, flew about him, hissing and roaring through the fog; his horse plunged nervously, but he never swerved in his saddle, never moved his head to avoid the blows that with every second rained at him, as the angered worshippers pelted their god because their bodies were fasting. At last, a flint, sharp, jagged, heavy, struck him, cutting through his clothes and wounding him in the shoulder; the blood poured out down his arm.

With a careless glance at it, he thrust his hand into the breast of his coat, took out his cigar-case, struck a fusee, and began to

smoke,—smoke, as calmly and with as much indifference as if he were on the couch of a smoking-room.

The crowds fell back, the thirsty menacing eyes stared vacantly at him, the yells dropped down into a low, unwilling, sullen muttering of wonder and admiration; the cool bravery, the calm *sang-froid*, of the action struck a chord never dumb in the English heart; they had pelted their god, and, lo! he was but the greater for it. They loved him once more with all a people's swift, passionate, volatile repentance; they broke out into riotous cheering, they tossed his name upward to the murky skies, with all the old faith and honour. Without speaking a word, he had conquered.

"That was like the Clarencieux blood!" thought Trevenna of his own coolness, with a smile. Then, sitting there in his saddle, he spoke,—spoke with all his skill and all his eloquence, rating them soundly like a whipper-in rating his hounds, till the great masses hung their heads penitent and ashamed before him, yet speaking so that they loved him more furiously than they had ever done, and making them, to a man, believe that all he took, all he did, all he said, all he projected, were only with one view,—their service. And on the morrow the whole nation was full of adoring applause for the self-devotion and the courage and the serenity with which a Cabinet Minister had risked his life to quell the northern riots, and to lead the people back to conciliation and to quietness with the charm of his eloquence and the spell of his personal daring.

"Magister de Vivis Lapidibus" was the title given in the Gothic age to the sculptors of the Gothic fanes. Trevenna might have borne it: it was out of the living stones of other men's lives that he carved the superstructure of his envied triumphs. It is only to those who have this supreme art that success comes.

CHAPTER III.

"TO TELL OF SPRING-TIDE PAST."

It was the blossoming-time of the early year in Venice, with the glow on the variegated marbles, and the balmy breezes stirring calm lagunes, and the scent of a myriad of spring-born flowers filling the air with their fragrance from the green-wreathed ruins of arches and the deep embayments of pillared casements. The world was waking after winter, and the joy of its renewed life laughed in every smile of colour, and crowned the earth with a diadem of leaf and of bud like a young Bacchus rousing from sleep to his revels.

"How its youth renews!" said Chandos to his own thoughts; "and we only know the value of ours when its beauty has faded for ever!"

"L'artiste est un dieu tombé qui se souvient du temps où il créait un monde." The memories of his perished world were with him,—the world in which his word had been as the thyrsus of Dionysus, a wand beneath whose touch all the earth laughed round him into fragrance. He had resisted the mandragora-steeped despair in which the great lives of Byron and De Quincey quenched their pain and ebbed away; he had taken the broken wreck of his peace boldly and calmly, and had sustained himself, sustained his courage, by desires loftier than happiness, by the treasuries of intellect, by the consolations of freedom. He had borne with the desolation of life for the sake of his manhood until it had ceased to be wholly desolate, because filled with the dignity of a high and a pure labour. He had done this, and done it so that no Ciceronian lament for exile ever was heard to pass his lips,—done it so that through it there had come to him the power most foreign to the careless sensuousness of his inborn nature,—the power of serene and unswerving endurance. He had suffered, but he had never lamented. He had known that to yield to suffering was to debase manliness, and that resistance and conflict are the only noble weapons with which adversity can be worthily met. He had been stung, and bruised, and cheated; he had been offered the bitterness of the hyssop and vinegar when his whole life was athirst for the living waters of loyalty and joy. Men had fooled him, betrayed him, forsaken him; but he had never in turn abandoned them, never reviled the humanity with which he had common bond, never abjured the faith and the creeds of his youth. The love he had borne men when they were at his feet, and the suns of a cloudless day had been shed across his path, lived with him still, now that he had been stabbed deep by their traitor-blades and had passed through the starless night of bereavement and of despair.

Yet at times the anguish of a great longing stole on him; at times the lust of a great vengeance seized him. At times he would wake from some dream of his youth, some dream that had borne him, for its hour, back to the home he had lost,—borne him to the fresh shelter of its forest leafage, to the sight of its beloved beauty, to the lulling echo of its familiar waters; wake, and, seeing the grey gleam of some foreign city in its wintry dawn or the torrid, reddened sun-glow of some eastern sky around him, clench his teeth like a man in torture to keep down the great tearless sob that shook him as the wind shakes reeds. At times he would break from the noble and tranquil repose of philosophy, from the treasuries of intellectual creation, from the calm of deep and scholarly ambition and meditation,—break from them as men break from the stillness of monastic cloisters and the coldness of monastic vows, with an agony of desire for the vivid joys and the vivid hues that had died from his life,—with as passionate an agony for the mere bloodthirst of revenge, that, under the goad of a giant wrong, will change the purest nature to the sheer brute instinct of self-wrought amends, of Mosaic justice.

He drifted now through Venice, beneath the marble walls and the casements dark and narrow, out of whose twilight glowed the

smile of the flowers' birth, with the water lazily parting under his boat's prow, and the green of spring-time foliage hanging over the jasper ledges. His heart was with spring-times that were past, when there had been no shadow on the earth for him, and the kiss of a woman's lips had made his idle golden paradise. "Love!" he thought, with a momentary regret that was in itself almost a passion. "It can live no more in my life; it is dead with all the rest." Yet now—for the instant at least—he would have given the kingship of half the world, had he owned it, to steep himself once more in the sweet, senseless delirium; he could have murmured, with Mirabeau when he looked back in his dungeons to the hours of his love, "Jouissance! jouissance! que de vies je donnerais pour toi!"

"If I returned to her?" he mused, in a doubt, in a desire, that had long haunted him, mingled with an anxiety that was almost remorse. "And yet—a child's love; it may be forgotten ere this. Besides, God knows her fate now; and, whatever it may be, I have no right to sacrifice her life to mine."

But there, in the sunset radiance, in the lulling of the water's murmur, in the heavy fragrance of the many blossoms, the thoughts of his youth were with him, and they wandered alone to Castalia. He had not known it whilst he had been with her, but in absence the desire of his heart had gone to her in what was scarce less than love. He had thrust it from him, because on her the world would have visited that love as dishonour.

As he passed through the charmed peace of the silent city in the first hour of his arrival there, all odorous and rich in the hues of the flowers' spring-tide luxuriance, the vessel floated down the noiseless highway into a sequestered, desolate street, whose dark walls faced each other with all life, all movement, banished, only with the intense glow of the sun on its many-coloured stones, and the wreathing of stone-clinging leafage filling the gaps of its broken sculptures. It was that in which, a few years before, the young patriots of Venice had given him the homage of their song of liberty. It was lonely, decayed, abandoned, with no sound in it but the endless lapping of the water on its sea-stairs; but it was grand, despite that, with its mute records of the glory that once had reigned there, its imperishable memories of things for ever perished.

The keel grated on the marble steps, worn and glistening with the splash of the water-spray; he landed, and passed up them to the place where he had once made his dwelling in Venice. The arc of a vast archway spanned the slope of the stairs, shutting out the light of the sun, and leaving only a flickering ray of the daylight's brilliance to lie across the interspaces of dense shadow that were cast downward from the mighty structure and the massive carvings, rich in jasper, and porphyry, and agate, which loomed in the height above. In the depth of the gloom, midway on the stone flight, a resting figure leaned in the passive, motionless repose of fatigue or of exhaustion,—a form that would have arrested an artist's glance in long-lingering admiration, that was

Venetian in its perfect grace, Titian-like in its perfect colour, that was set as a brilliant painting in an ebony framework in that cavernous gloom of the arch, in exquisite harmony yet in exquisite contrast with the antique and melancholy majesty of the forsaken palace-way. The head was drooped forward; but there was no sleep in the eyes that gazed wearily down on the ebb and flow of the gliding canal; the lids were heavily weighted, but it was not with slumber, but with an unshed mist of tears; the lips were slightly parted, as with pain, but there was on them a proud fixity of resolve; the hands leaned on the twisted osier handle of a basket, from which spring flowers fell unheeded in coils and masses of blossom down about her on the worn stone. The single flash of sunlight that found entrance beneath the marbles fell, intense and concentred in its heat and its glow, alone on the scattered foliage and on the golden gleam of her uncovered hair. The attitude, the flower-fragrance, the languor of repose, were the same as they had been under the beech-shadows of Tuscany; but the dreaming peace of childhood was banished for ever.

He saw her as, coming out of the splendour of the day, he glanced, half blinded, up the twilight of the palace-steps; and her name left his lips with a cry,—"Castalia!" She looked up with a look in her eyes that smote him with a pang keen and heavy as a murderer's remorse, and, starting from her musing rest, sprang towards him with all the wealth of the spring buds and blossoms scattered into the gliding darkness of the water; then—like a shot fawn—she fell downward at his feet, the shower of her glistening tresses trailing on the sea-wet marbles of the stair.

If he had never loved her, he loved her then. He lifted her, senseless to his touch, into his arms, where she had rested through the tumult of the storm; he murmured to her a thousand names that had never been on his utterance since the days of his youth, when there was no toy so fair to him as the fairness of woman; he swept the burnished weight of her hair back from the face from which he had exiled the smile of its childhood, the light of its peace. For the moment he was once more young; for the moment time and calamity, and the bitterness of disillusion, and the coldness of dead hopes and dead desires, were as though they had never been; for the moment passion once again transfigured all existence, and blinded him with its warm golden glow so sweet because so transient, so strong in power and so vain in reason. The cost of it is oftentimes deadly and far-reaching; but its lotus dream of forgetfulness is worth it while it lasts.

The shock of joy had stunned her; she lay unconscious in his embrace. No living thing was near them in the darkness of the old sea-palace; there was only the sound of the retreating oars beating out a soft, sad, distant music; there was only the one broad beam of vivid light that flushed the tint of the fallen carnation-buds to scarlet, and burned on the loosened splendour of her hair that swept across his breast. He stooped his head over her, gazing on her with a love that had silently grown, born in absence and from pity, and that sprang up like a tropic flower which

springs to its height in one short Eastern night, with the sudden sight of her young beauty.

As though his kiss wakened her and called back the mind from its trance, her heart, where it beat on his own, throbbed faster; her eyes opened wide and startled, as they had opened when he had roused her from her sleep in the storm; for an instant she lay passive in his arms, gazing upward at him with the glory of a joy, bewildered as a dream, dawning, as the day dawns, on her face.

"O God, be pitiful! Let me never wake."

Such dreams so often had mocked her.

"Castalia, look at me, hear me. I am with you. Have you loved me so well, then?"

At the sound of his voice a flush like the scarlet heat of the fallen carnation-leaves glowed in her cheek; her eyes looked upward to him, but half conscious still.

"At last! at last!"

The murmur broke from her, stifled with the rush of tears; she quivered from his embrace, and crouched down at his feet, till her face was veiled from him. The knowledge of love was on her, and it stilled and filled with the dread of his scorn the anguish of joy with which her heart seemed breaking as a nightingale's breaks with the rapture of song.

He stooped to her, and his hand touched her with a gentleness that thrilled her with its caress like fire.

"Castalia, have you loved me despite my desertion,—through all my cruelty?"

Her brow drooped still, till the bright masses of her hair bathed his feet.

"Eccellenza! I have only prayed God to let me see your face, and die."

The words were so low they barely stirred the air, yet he heard them; and his eyes grew dim: it was long since any had given him love; it had an infinite sweetness for him. He stood silent and motionless a moment, looking down on her where she knelt with the Venetian light shed like an aureole about her. Then the old dominion, the reckless sovereignty, of passion vanquished him; he drew her once more into his arms, he lifted again her bowed head, that sunk downward like a broken flower on the chill dark marble of the water-stairs; the gaze that had never, sleeping or waking, been absent from her memory, met hers with a look that made her senses sick and faint with the paradise of joy that doubted its own being.

"Castalia, we are both alone; let us be the world to one another."

She lay passive in his hold; her face was turned upward to him with the radiance of the sun fallen across her proud bright brow; her lips trembled; she heard him with a breathless incredulity, a breathless ecstasy.

"Oh, my lord, you mock me! Love! *your* love!—for *me!*"

It seemed to her the gift of so divine a world, the treasury of so vast a sovereignty, the benediction of so godlike a mercy! She could not think that it could be her own. She could not hold a lifetime of service and of sacrifice title sufficient for it.

He drew her closer and closer to his breast, and, for all answer, spent his kisses on her lips.

"Do you doubt *now?*"

With the touch of his caresses the consciousness alike of the passion she wakened and the passion she cherished stole on her; the barrier between them, that her veneration for him had raised by the deep humility of its own worship, seemed to fall as his eyes gazed down into hers; for the first time the knowledge of what love he might bear her, of what love she might render him, came to her with the glow of its warmth, with the wonder of its deep and hushed delight. The carnation flush of her face burned deeper in its soft shame; a sigh trembled through her, where she rested in his arms as a hunted bird rests in its haven of shelter.

"For the pity of God—if I am dreaming, kill me while I dream!"

The words died in their prayer; her gaze met his, heavy with the voluptuous weight of new-born thoughts, the eyes of Sappho under the first breath of love. His hand wandered among the floating gold of her sun-lightened tresses; his lips sought ever and again the warmth of hers.

"Let me dream with you, if I can! Let me dream, too, once more,—dream that you give me back my youth!"

CHAPTER IV.

"TO THINE OWN SELF BE TRUE."

He gazed down on her, and wondered how he could ever have left her.

The flight of a few months had brought her loveliness to its perfection; and the silence of endurance, the passion of suffering, had left on it a heroism and a power that gave tenfold more beauty to the luxuriance of its youth, more intensity to the splendour of its hues. Young though she was, hers was already a life to be a poet's mistress, to comprehend and to inspire loftiest ambitions, highest efforts, noblest thoughts, to gain from the lips of a man the words of Dante,—

> "Quella che imparadisa la mia mente,
> Ogni basso pensier dal cor m'avulse."

As the full consciousness of his presence and of his love wakened in her, as the sense of his words and the truth of her dream dawned on her till her heart seemed breaking with its rapture, she drew herself from his embrace, and sank down beside him, her head bowed upon his hand.

"Ah! this is but your pity?"

The words were low-breathed as a sigh.

To her, he was so far above her, far as the stars in their divine majesty; to her it seemed that she could have nothing to raise her

into fitness with his life. For all answer he lifted her head upward as he stooped over her.

"Only pity? Look in my eyes, and see!"

Once before he had said the last words to one whom they had no power to stir, whose heart was chill as ice against his own. Now the whole fervour of a southern nature thrilled in answer to them. Castalia looked up, and met his gaze; then the burning colour flushed her cheek and her bosom, a light like a flash of sunlight trembled over her face, her lips parted with a deep broken breath. From his eyes she had learned what her reverence in its humility could not realise; she never asked, she never doubted, again whether he loved her.

And the weight and the wonder of its joy seemed to kill her with its glory.

> "What can I give thee back, O liberal
> And princely giver, who hast brought the gold
> And purple of thine heart?"

her own heart asked.

"Oh, my lord, my king!" she murmured, while her lips hesitatingly touched his hand in the kiss of a slave's veneration, "I am not worthy! A word from you, a smile from you such as you give the dogs, were all *I* prayed for! What can I render you? I am nameless and desolate!"

Of the gifts of her own loveliness she never thought; she had known them no more than the passion-flower knows its own hues.

"You will give me yourself, and you will give me youth,—gifts more precious than the treasures of a world, Castalia! My love!—all my youth through I sought your likeness, and never found you! You waited to be the angel of consolation to the darkness of years, that were without a joy in them until you brought one."

"Ah! you are not happy?"

He smiled,—a smile in which the melancholy of his fate was tinged with impassioned tenderness for her.

"When I look on you, I am."

"Oh, my lord! if I can make you so one hour, I shall have lived enough."

He understood her. This vivid, intense, devotional love was very precious to him; he had dreamed of it in the ideals of his poetic fancies; and it was doubly sweet now that it came to him after the desert waste of many years, in which no smile had lightened for him, no lips touched his own. Where he rested in the shadow and the solitude of the old palace-entrance, the dead days revived once more for him. Once more he lost himself in the languor and the warmth and the oblivion of passion, as he murmured to her a thousand caressing names, and drew from her the story of her wanderings, touched beyond words by the pathetic simplicity of that search for him through the vastness of an unknown world.

"I sought you, Eccellenza; yes," she murmured, while she looked up at him with an appealing deprecating prayer, "I could not stay when you were gone; my heart was dead, my life was

broken. And I heard them speak evil against you, and the Padre Giulio lifted up his voice with them; and I would not wait and eat the bread of those who had once touched your name. For I heard that name at the last, and I knew you then greater than any kings; I knew the book that I loved as your book, the thoughts I had treasured as your thoughts. But, though I sought you, it was not to seek your pity, not to ask your mercy. I never meant that you should know that I was near:—if ever I met you, I only meant to watch you from a distance, to hear your voice, to see your face, while you knew nothing. You believe me?—you believe it?"

The terror on her was great, lest he should think that she had followed him to appeal to his compassion, to force herself on his life. His eyes were dim, his voice quivered, as he answered her,—

"Believe it? Yes! each word that your lips say. My darling, my darling, what you have suffered! and suffered through and for me!"

"Eccellenza," she said, under her breath, "I would suffer a thousand years of *that* for this one hour."

"Hush! hush! or I shall love you too well; and all that *I* love I lose. Such courage, such patience, such fidelity; and you ask, what you have that you give me?"

"Those are nothing," she said, dreamily. "The mercy is—to let me render them. It has been so long, O God! so long! Here in Venice it was a little happier. The people speak of you; they love you, though they say it beneath their breath, because of the tyranny. They said you would come here with the spring; and so —I waited."

The words were simple, spoken with the tears of remembered anguish heavy on her lashes; but all her story was told in them. "She had waited," with the faith of a child, the passion of a woman: it was the epitome of the intense volition and the silent power of sacrifice that met in her nature. It was the ideal of which he had once vainly dreamed; it moved him now to an emotion keen to pain.

"Castalia, in my youth I loved many, yet my youth never had such love as yours. What you have suffered while I knew nothing! And you never loathed me for my cruelty?"

"Cruelty? You were never cruel. You saved my life; it was yours to take or to leave, to command or to neglect."

"But I left you to this loneliness, to this peril! How have you lived, fragile and friendless, and dowered with the danger of such beauty?"

Her face grew pale. The past was terrible to her,—a time never to be dwelt on without a horror of remembrance; and she would not wound him by confessing all she had endured.

"It is over," she said softly; "let it sleep."

"It will never sleep in *my* memory. And now, now that we have met, what does the thought of my love bring you?"

Her eyes dwelt on his, deep and dreamy as the night, with the fire of a tropic nature in their depths; her voice was hushed below her breath.

"How can I say? I know now how possible it is to die of joy; I feel as if I should die so to-night!"

He drew her nearer still into his embrace. The words sent a chill through him; all that his heart had clung to had been taken, soon or late.

"God forbid! Live to bless me, Castalia; live to be my love, my consoler, my mistress, my wife!"

The last word left his lips in unconsidered impulse. She was his so utterly, his to cherish or destroy, to honour or dishonour, to lead as he chose, to make what he would; the absolute defencelessness of her life, the absolute abandonment of her trust, forbade him to seek from her aught that others would have held her sacrifice.

Where she rested in his arms, she trembled from head to foot, the liquid darkness of her eyes grew burning with the bewildered vision of a future that passed all which her thought had ever reached; her senses seemed blind and faint; she felt as though angel hands had been laid on her and had raised her upward into the light of eternal suns.

"No, no!" she murmured, while her gaze dwelt on his with all the humility and all the idolatry that were in her; "I have no title! I was born of shame, they say; I am without name, or kin, or worthiness. I am yours to neglect, to smile upon, to forsake, to command,—as you will! Let me be as your slave; let me follow and serve and obey you as spaniels may; let me live in your sight, and have honour enough in one word, in one touch:—that is all that *I* am meet for from you!"

The words moved him as no words that had claimed her justice or his tenderness would ever have done,—words that had the sublime self-oblivion and self-devotion of Heloïse.

"Not so! You were worth empires if I had them in my gift. Castalia, there is but one passion possible between us now. The world, as its bigotry stands, would call that passion your shame, unless my name were bestowed with it,—unless the marriage-benediction were on you. I have little left to give; but such as I have shall be yours."

The scarlet flush deepened over her bosom; her head drooped till her lips touched his hand again in their reverent kiss; her voice was broken and lost in tears.

"Ah, God! what can I say to you? how can my life repay you? You gave me all—gave me the world—when you once gave me your love!"

Past the darkened arch of the entrance a gondola floated slowly down the solitary and neglected street,—a vessel richly arrayed, and piled in the prow with a fragrant load of gathered violets and red carnation buds. Lying back in it was a form, delicate and patrician, covered with costly laces and velvets; her cheek rested on her hand; her hand glittered with diamonds. She looked up languidly as the boat dropped past the high and massive sculpture

of the mighty archway. The gloom was deep as twilight beneath its arc, yet her eyes pierced it and caught the hues of the fallen flowers, the gleam of the golden hair,—eyes falcon-bright, pitiless, and unerring,—the eyes of Heloïse de la Vivarol.

"She has found him!" she said, in her teeth. "And he loves her. So it comes round,—so it comes round!"

So her vengeance came round to her,—her vengeance vowed in the years that were gone. Women may forget their love, and change it; but there are few who ever forget the oath or the desire of jealousy.

The flitting by of that single gondola was unseen by them, the noise of its oars drowned in the ripple of the water beneath the wide slope of the stairs. He surrendered himself once more to the forgetfulness and the sweetness of passion; and her life seemed to rest in a trance divine as that which comes to the lotus-eaters. The darkness of the vast stone pile enclosed them in its shadow and its solitude; the red gold of the fast-declining sun only stole in a single ray across the lustre of her eyes as they looked up to his. The heavy fragrance of the fallen flowers weighted the air; the delicious monotone of the water's ebb and flow below against the marble alone stirred the stillness. Time passed on; neither counted its flight. The sun set, the odorous night fell; it seemed to her at once brief as a moment, long as a lifetime, since she had found him whom she had grown to hold her sovereign and her religion.

Through the gloom, as the depth of night fell, a voice came from above them.

"Castalia, art thou not home?"

"Who is that?" Chandos said, swiftly. "Who calls you by your name?"

"Ah! I had forgotten him!" she murmured, with that soft contrition with which she had once pleaded her forgetfulness of the Tuscan priest. "I was wrong to say I was wholly friendless. He has been very good. He is a Jew, old, and blind, and poor; but he led me here, and he brought me to some women of his nation, who have been gentle to me, because they knew me to be homeless and motherless."

As she spoke, the old man came slowly down the steps, feeling his way with that wavering uncertain movement of his hands that was in so pathetic a contrast with the dignity of his austere and venerable age. A gleam of the white luminous Venetian moon fell across the majesty of his bowed head and lofty form.

"Good God!—at last!"

The words escaped involuntarily as he rose to his feet, facing the figure of the Israelite. He had sought the old man far and diligently since the night when he had found him wandering in the streets,—sought him on the vague, baseless, shapeless thoughts and the unerring instinct of the desire for vengeance.

The Jew paused and listened; his quick ear apprised him of her presence, and of another beside hers.

"Castalia, who is with thee?"

"It is I!"

At the sound of his voice the Jew started, and over the brown worn sternness of his face, Chandos saw the look that had come there when he had spoken his name in the blind man's ear.

"It is I," he continued, as he passed up the sea-stairs, and stood beside the Israelite on the breadth of the marble landing-place. "You have been good and pitiful to a life that is very dear to me, I hear. Take my deepest gratitude for every tenderness you have shown her, every pang you have striven to spare her."

Over the old man's face swept the look of pain and of shame that had been there in the after-midnight in Paris,—a look that hardened instantly into a rugged iron calm.

"I have served her little," he said, briefly. "The maiden has gained her own bread by the choirs of her Church, and the sale of flowers while flowers bloomed. I owe her more than she owes me. And what is she to *you*?"

"The only thing I love."

A sigh rose to the Hebrew's lips. Castalia's life had been precious to him; he had grown to listen for her voice, and her step, and her presence, as the aged listen for the only thing that reminds them of the world in which they once had place: he knew that she would be lost to him now. But the rigid austerity of his face kept its reticence.

"Love! And you left her to wander and starve?"

"I had no knowledge of her fate. *Had* I left her as you think, I should merit now your worst reproach, your worst rebuke."

"Pardon me, sir. *I* should not have doubted your mercy. Yet, for the child's sake, I would hear more. Is she your daughter?"

"Mine! God forbid!"

The Hebrew turned his sightless eyes on Castalia.

"Wilt thou leave us?"

She passed from them into the darkness of the palace-entrance. The Hebrew bent his face so that the moonlight which he felt was on it, should not be shed there.

"Sir, I have no title to arraign you. Yet they tell me she has a marvellous loveliness. Will you make of her but your mistress?"

"No; she shall bear my name."

"Verily? And you were ever so proud!"

"I am too much so now, perhaps. Yet I may justly be too proud to mislead what trusts me."

"Ah! your creeds were never those of your fellow-men. They are not of the world, sir,—not of the world!"

There was an acrid bitterness in the Israelite's words, because he felt a poignant suffering; he moved to feel his feeble way down the steps, to escape the presence that was one continual rebuke to him. Chandos laid his hand on him and arrested him. Memories were rising from the vague chaos of far-off remembrance; knowledge was coming to him dimly and with difficulty.

"Wait! We have other words to speak. Who was your chief, your tyrant?"

For a moment the Hebrew's frame shook in every fibre; the next, the complete control, the steel-like power of endurance, in him returned,—immovable.

"That secret will be buried with me."

"Buried? It is not buried; it is clear to me. Answer me. Your bondmaster was my foe?"

His face grew eager, and quivered with swift-rising passion, in which all softer memories were lost. The Hebrew's features never changed; they were cast in bronze, when he would.

"It may be so. Perhaps your foes are many."

"You equivocate! Answer me,—yes or no. It was John Trevenna?"

"I equivocate in nothing; I simply keep silence. I shall keep it until death."

The answer was so unmoved in its iron serenity that not even the man who watched and who heard him could gather one sign by which to know the truth.

"Keep it? And he tortured you, chained you, cursed you!"

There was a magnificent grandeur in the old man's attitude as he raised his head.

"What of that? I swore the oath to the God of Israel; I keep it because he spared the life of the youth. The Gentiles take oaths by our God, to break them; ours are redeemed, come what will."

Chandos stood silent a moment. On his nature, even in the first agony of the desire for vengeance, the appeal could not be lost. He recognised the greatness of the fidelity, even whilst it stood like a barrier of granite between him and the justice of retribution, the knowledge of his past. But, as he gazed on the Hebrew, the light of remembrance broke on him; the crowd of the porphyry chamber came back on his memory; a great cry broke from him.

"Wait! *I* swear that this darkness shall be made light. You were among the claimants on Clarencieux?"

The Jew turned his sightless eyes, his rugged face upon him, impassive as death.

"Say that I was; what does that prove? There were many claimants, and just ones."

"It proves enough to me! A Jew firm was the largest of my creditors: that firm was yours. Your tyrant ruled it: that tyrant was my traitor. My wealth went to him: he devoured it. The world called me mad: I was so, for I was his dupe! Answer me: your torturer and my enemy were one?"

The Hebrew's features were impenetrable as the night; he was stirred no more than were the marbles around him.

"You speak widely, sir, and without warrant. It is vain to appeal to me. I neither deny nor affirm; I keep the silence for which I suffered."

"Suffered!—and for a fiend?"

"Suffered,—for my oath's sake."

The grandeur of the resistance to him wrung his reverence from

Chandos, even whilst the anguish, the fire, the impotence of awakening wrath and awakening knowledge rose in tumult.

"Keep it!" he said, while his voice rang with the might of his passions. "Kept or broken, it shall avail nothing to guard him from my vengeance. I know enough, without more knowledge, to stamp his infamy in the sight of men. Those lost deeds, that hidden usury, that trading in the trust and the necessities of his friends,—it will blast his name through Europe!"

The Hebrew's harsh calm tones answered him with judicial brevity.

"What do you know? Nothing! You suspect;—you will speak on suspicion; baseless and unproved, the accusation will recoil harmless from the accused, to brand the accuser as a libellist and a false witness."

Chandos quivered in every limb as he heard; the rage of justice paralysed from its stroke, of truth impotent to make manifest its truth, seized him with maddening misery. He was once again in the coils of the net that had wound itself so long about his life to fetter and destroy.

"Oh, God!" he said, "why will you shield your destroyer and mine? why will you shelter the iniquity you have said you repent? Your own soul is noble: what sympathy have you with the villany you have abjured? Your own sacrifice has been grand: why will you have so much tenderness of sins that are vile as murder?"

"I have none; but I am true to him by whom my son was spared."

"What! are traitors, and tyrants, and criminals to find such loyalty, whilst honest men are betrayed and abjured by the score? Have you no pity, no remorse, for the wrongs of a life?"

"Sir, if I had ever known either pity or remorse, I had not been what I was."

Chandos' hand clenched on the old man's shoulder. Conviction, strong, unbearable, intense, was on him that this Hebrew held the secret of his enemy's hatred, and that John Trevenna was the curse of both their fates; yet he was as impotent to wring the truth as to force blood from the cold black marbles beneath their feet.

"Listen! I have pitied you from my heart, honoured your endurance from my soul; but I have the wrongs of a lifetime to avenge. I *know*, as though the proof were by me, that my foe is one with your master, that fraud and treachery and baseness had more share in my ruin than my own extravagance. Speak now, or—as we believe in one God—the law shall make you."

The Hebrew turned his blind eyes on him with the patience of his race.

"The law? It did its worst on me: had it power to make me speak?"

"Great Heaven! crime gets such loyalty as this, while I found love and friendship traitors!"

The Jew's bronzed face grew paler, his close-set lips shook slightly under the snowy whiteness of his beard; but he remained immovable. Chandos stood above him, his eyes black, his teeth set.

"Man—man! if you ever loved, if you ever hated, give me my vengeance!"

"Sir," said the Hebrew, with his grave and caustic speech, "beware! You lust for an evil thing."

"No! I claim a barren justice."

"Justice is not given on earth. Hear me. You urge me to evil——"

"I urge you to the service of truth, to the chastisement of infamy——"

"It may be so; yet hear me. You tempt me to evil, because you tempt me to forswear the sole fidelity in gratitude that redeems my baseness. I know your life; I know your thoughts; I know that you have loved men well, served them unweariedly, taught them high and gracious things. When you heard my story, you called it a martyrdom whose nobility men seldom reached: why call it now a sheltering of evil, because your own wish is to behold that evil unearthed? You told me then I had atoned for my past: why tell me now I only stain it further? This is unworthy you,—untrue to your creeds. Were your passions now unloosened, your life now unbiassed, you would be the first to say to me, 'Before all, keep your oath sacred.'"

Chandos' hand fell, his breath came loud and quick; he stood like one pierced to the heart with an exceeding bitterness.

"Sir," went on the Hebrew's unbroken, impassive voice, "it is true that you have a secret of mine that you can torture me with, if you will; but I have read your nature wrong if you will use against me the weapons that I, unconscious, placed in your hold. You have passed through vast calamities since the day that I stood amidst your spoilers; they will have failed to teach you what I believe they have taught you, if you tempt another to dishonour because through that dishonour you believe your own desires would be served, your own revenge gained to you."

Chandos stood silent still; a mortal struggle shook him.

"I am no god. What you ask of me is a god's divine, impartial justice! I claim a man's right, a man's weakness, a man's sin of vengeance."

"It may be so: yet, if you be true to yourself, it is that very impartiality of justice—all hard though it may be—that you will render."

There was a long silence, in which only the lapping of the water sounded. No demand that honour had ever made on him had been so merciless in cruelty as this, no contest that had wrung his life so hard to meet. His voice was very low as it fell at last on the stillness.

"You are right! I tempt you no more."

The Hebrew bowed his head.

"There a great life spoke."

Then, slowly, with his sightless, feeble movement, he passed down the water-stairs till the dignity of his dark, bent form, was lost in the breadth of the shadows. Chandos let him go, unarrested. He stood there, blind to all around him, dead to all memory save

one. The blackness of night was on his soul, and the violence of baffled passion shook him as a storm-wind the strength of the cedars. There was but one terrible thirst upon him,—the thirst for his vengeance.

Where he stood, his arm dropped as though the nervous force of it were broken; his eyes gazed without sight down the shaft of the gloomy stairs, where the water glistened cold and gliding in the flicker of the moon. The conviction of his foe's guilt was scored on his mind as though he had beheld it written up through the length and breadth of the lands! the meshes of his own impotence for chastisement and retribution bound him helpless as one paralysed; the human lust of evil possessed him as his madness possessed Saul.

A while,—and in the soft Venetian darkness of the young night Castalia stole to him, she touched his hand with the suppliant kiss of her tender homage, she raised upward to his face the dreamy lustre of her eyes.

"My lord, is regret with you because you were too merciful to me? If it be, say it. My life is only lived for you."

His arms drew her to him in the vibration of the passions that beat in him.

"Regret!—when in you I find all the consolation I shall ever know? Castalia, dark hours come on me: you must not fear them. My heart is sick because of its own failure. Tempted, I am weak as water, I am cruel as murderers. I have lived, and striven, and suffered, and sought to serve men, only at the last to reel back into a barbarian's lust,—to be athirst with a Cain's desires!"

For the evil that his foe had wrought him had not yet reached its end, and it poisoned now the first sweet hours of reviving happiness.

It might go farther yet, and close his life in crime.

CHAPTER V.

THE CODES OF ARTHUR.

In the darkness of large, jutting marble blocks, in another quarter of Venice, Ignatius Mathias held his almost nightly vigil,—the vigil which had but one aim and but one reward,—to hear the passing footstep of his son. Agostino had come to Venice in the restlessness of one who has peace nowhere and vainly thinks with each new refuge to escape what haunts him. He lived the life that a hare leads in hunting seasons: the season may pass and leave the animal in safety, unmolested under the shade of fern and thyme, but none the less with every hour must its heart beat, and its sleep be broken, and its nerves tremble at every crack of the branches, every sough of the wind, lest its hunters be out on its

scent. Years would go, and his tyrant need nothing of him; but all the same he was never sure but that some cruel task might any day be required at his hands, and no alternative left him but to do its work, however abhorrent, or to brave the shame of public slander and public exposure, from which the feminine terrors of his nature had so long shrunk as more unendurable than death. But of this tyranny that ruled his life his father knew nothing: he heard of the painter's fame, of his talent, of his growing wealth, of his adoration, of his art, of his love for his Spanish wife, and he believed Agostino happy with the happiness that he had himself sacrified all to purchase for "the lad." He was ever but a youth in the old man's thoughts, a beautiful, yielding, caressing, tender-natured boy, won by a smile, crushed by a stern word, as he had been when the eyes whose blindness now kept him ever young in their memory had last looked upon the graciousness of his early years. That Agostino could grow older with the growth of time never came to the remembrance of one who had parted with him in his boyhood; he had eternal youth in the love of the sightless man. There is thus far mercy for the blind, that they know nothing of the stealing change that robs the beauty which is cherished from the eyes that cherish it, slowly and cruelly, until the last change of all.

Ignatius Mathias stood now, so guiding himself by the marvellous compensative instinct which his calamity confers, that he was secured from all passers-by by the jutting-out of the stone, and his long, black, floating garments could scarce be told from the marble that shrouded him. If by any chance a stray moonbeam wandered through to the deep shelter of the statueless niche, it would have seemed to any casual passer-by that it was filled by some sculptured figure of prophet or of priest which was in perfect keeping with the solemn and melancholy grandeur round. He was listening eagerly, intently; but his hands were clenched on the marble where he leaned, and his heart ached with the burden of remorse, the dry, tearless, hopeless grief of age.

It had pierced him to the quick to remain steeled to Chandos' prayer, as it had been bitter to him to show no sign of respect in the porphyry hall at Clarencieux, when all the heartless crowd about him had been moved and awed by the dignity of adversity. The keen Israelite could reverence from his soul the man who in his deadliest passions was still obedient to the demand and the duty of justice; and he felt that he too had sinned towards him.

"It was a villanous sin to rob him," he mused,—"vilest treachery, vilest murder. He heaped coals of fire on my head with every one of his just words; and yet it would bring him nothing even if he knew all. *We* were always within the law. He would wreck all the nobility of his nature in the blood-hound thirst of vengeance; he would do what would belie his life. Pshaw! why do I deal with these sophistries? If he slew his foe, and slew me, it would be no more, as he said, than barren justice. But give it him I never will. Sin or martyrdom, whichever it be, added crime or atoning fidelity, I will die silent; I will be true to him by whom my son was spared,—true to the last."

His face set in stern, unflinching resolve, the firmness of silence, the dignity of faithfulness, which would be true to its bond, even if that bond were forged by crime, lent it nobility; then the caustic and ironic bitterness in which his temper had steeled itself long to all gentler things passed over it.

"Why should I care for *one?*" he muttered. "There were thousands. If I ever spoke, I should unloose hell-dogs; if I ever made atonement by turning traitor, what lives I should have to summon out of their graves to hear my *mea culpa*, if I called all my auditors!"

The smile was evil on his face, though that evil was more sad than other men's sorrow. His hands had been as millstones, grinding all that went through them to powder, that the grist might feed the yawning sack of money-lust. If all his accusers would rise against him, the tomb must yield up its dead.

A slight sound caught his ear; he started, and listened as Indians listen. He had kept this vigil long and often, in divers scenes and divers hours,—under the cold shadow of green leaves, under the driving snow of winter nights, under the broad gables of antique houses, under the drenching rains of autumn skies, under the mild stars of vintage eves, moving unweariedly in the changing, restless track of an artist's wanderings, content if reward came in the echo of a laugh, in the distant murmur of a voice, in the passing of a far-off footfall. Unseen, unthanked, unrecompensed, save by such fleeting things as could be borne on summer air or heard through winter blasts, his great and silent love endured. A step passed by him; he held his breath as it went; he knew that his son was nigh. Then the faint sound died to silence, and the light died from his face; this was all, all that was left him,—one moment to be scored against a martyrdom; and his lips moved in voiceless prayer and thanksgiving. He breathed his blessing on the life that passed by him in the hush of the night; he was grateful even for so little. It sufficed; his son lived.

Where the silver lustre of the Venetian moon poured down through lofty casements of a desolate palace-chamber, Chandos, as he looked into the eyes that once more spoke to him in the language of his youth, strove to put from him the remembrance of his traitor, the thirst for his vengeance; and he could not. The darkness of a violent and unsparing hatred had seized him. Hate was foreign to his nature, yet it had sprung in growth fast as poison-plants from poison-seeds in the rank soil of Africa. With his foe in his hands now, he could have stamped his life out with as little mercy as men show who crush a rattlesnake. The fangs of a snake had bitten him; the coils of a snake strangled him; the virus of a snake entered his whole life to change and wither and consume it. The snake was Treachery; and he could have killed the traitor with the fierce meed of such justice as men took when the sword made alike law and judge and avenger.

He strove to thrust it from him, and it would return,—return to darken and embitter the sweetness of a love long denied to him, vivid and voluptuous as any that had usurped him in the years when the fairness of woman had made his paradise. He had left her a child, to pity, to caress, to play with, without deeper thought; he found her in a few brief months, extreme as her youth still was, a woman in her superb beauty, her courage, her genius, her patrician grace, her far-reaching meditative thought, her endurance of suffering, her fearlessness through danger. With the simplicity of a child, she had left Vallombrosa on the sting of coarse jests of the peasantry, that she had resented without wholly comprehending, of imputed dishonour to her and to him which had roused her like a young lioness, though she had but dimly known their meaning,—left it, and flung herself on the unknown, untraversed world with the simplicity of a child. She was now abandoned to him, to his will, to his wish, to his power, asking him nothing of his life, yielding him an absolute submission, and seeking no more of him or of the world than the one joy of his presence. But the intense strength of a supreme passion vibrated through the unquestioning idolatry she rendered him. "*Poco spero, nulla chiede,*" had been the soul of the reverence she bore him, but with it ran the burning warmth of the suns that had shone on her from her birth.

It was the love of which he had dreamed,—the love which he had desired, and never found.

In those long hours of the spring night, while the lulling of the water sounded softly through the open casements, and no light was about them except the light of the great stars above Venice, he almost resigned himself to their enchantment, he almost cheated himself into the belief that the years of his youth had revived,—almost. The desire of vengeance, the baffled justice, the impotence to cast off one stone from the granite cairn that had been heaped to crush his peace beneath it, all these that were upon him forbade him the one lotus-draught he longed for,—forgetfulness.

Love itself is youth, and cannot revive without bringing some light of youth back with it.

With her, his life seemed once more what it had been when, in the lauguor of the East, and under the glow of Southern skies, he had loved and been loved in the careless vivid sweetness of a poet's passions, deep-hued and changing as a sapphire in the sun. But when later he left her for the few short hours remaining of the night, left her lest foul tongues should touch her defenceless innocence, the spell broke. His soul was set upon his vengeance,—set in the impotence of David's desperation: "How long, O Lord? how long?" It seemed to him as though no retribution could ever serve to wash out his wrongs, and stamp his traitor what he was in the sight of the people who followed and believed in him; it seemed to him as though no justice that could rend the living lie of this man's life asunder, and show its hidden vileness to the world he fooled, would ever cut deep enough, ever reach wide enough, ever avail enough to avenge the endless treachery with

which his foe had taken food and raiment and wealth from him with one hand, to thieve and stab him with the other. "My God!" he thought, as he went alone through the stillness of the after-midnight, "what could vengeance do sufficient? None could give me back all the world I have lost, all the years I have consumed, all the joy he wrecked for ever, all the youth he slew in me at one blow. Vengeance! the worst would be as a drop beside an ocean.

If the means came to his hand to strike his enemy down from the eminence of station and the fruitage of achieved ambition, it could do at its best so little; if it could destroy the future, it could efface nothing of the past, it could change none of these years that had seemed so endless, through whose course he had dwelt in banishment and bitterness and seen his Iscariot caressed and crowned. Though his hand should ever dash down the brimming cup of Trevenna's success, the uneven balance between them could never be redressed; the world-wide wrong must ever remain unrequited, uneffaced. What could give him back all it had killed for ever in him? What could bring back to earth the gallant and beloved life of the old man whom it had slain? What could restore him to all he had forfeited through it? What could make him ever again as he had been when its ruin had blasted the glory from his years for ever?

Where he went in the silence of the late night, past the great Austrian palaces, that were filled with revelry and music, and the fragrance of flowers, and the masking of Carnival balls, with the gay riots of the melodies echoing through the conquered city, and the wreathing of gold and silk and many-coloured blossoms hanging all alight with lamps over the melancholy and the dignity of the time-honoured, sea-worn marbles, the rich, rolling, silver cadence of a Bacchic chant, sung with careless mirth and deep Olympian laughter, rang across the waters and above the strains of the Austrian music. It was the voice of Philippe d'Orvâle.

In his Carnival dress, with its scarlet-and-gold floating back, and the light of the stars and the crescents of lamps glittering on its jewelled brilliance, he came down a flight of stone stairs from some reckless revelry, the song on his lips, the laughter still given back in answer to a challenge from some fair maskers that leaned above, the fragrance of wine only just dashed from the auburn silver-flecked waves of his beard. "*Vivre selon son cœur!*" was the epitome of "the Mad Duke's" life, as of Diderot's; and, as in Diderot's, there was a grand, careless, Titan majesty in this handsome head, tossed back in such fiery defiance, such sunny laughter, against the laws of conventionality and the snow barriers of prejudice. Life was too rich with him to be stinted by a niggard measure; its joys, its passions, its treasures, its scope, too wide, to be meted out by the foot-rule of custom; and while men of his own years grew grey about him, the prince-Bohemian laughed at Time, and found the roses of his wine-feasts' blossom never fading to his hand.

His Bacchan chaunt paused; a gentle, softened look gleamed

from the flash of his brown, fearless eyes, as in the shadow of the street he saw Chandos.

"Ah! *c'est toi!*" And in the touch of his hand as it fell on the shoulder of the man he loved best, there was the welcome of a friendship close as brotherhood.

Not a tree had ever been felled at Clarencieux, not a picture been stirred, not a horse, useless from age, been shot, not a trifle in the whole length of the chambers, not an unfinished sketch in the forsaken atelier, not a disordered manuscript in the solitude of the Greuze Cabinet, been touched, under Philippe d'Orvâle's reign. With him the exile was honoured; with him the memory of the disinherited was kept green and cherished and sacred in the hearts of the people. "I am but his viceroy: keep your homage for the absent," he had said once when the peasantry had addressed him as their lord.

"So! you are in Venice?" he said, softly, where he paused in the deeper shadow, with the festoons of light and the arabesques of flower-wreathed balcony far above, reflected in the black surface of the canal. "I half hoped to meet you here when I came for this riotous Carnival time with which our Austria Felix tries to drown the murmurs of her prey. You have not been long?"

"I came but to-day. Lulli needed me——"

"Lulli? what ails him?" This princely Bohemian, whose own strength was so superb and whose existence so joyous, had always had a singular compassion and tenderness for the cripple whose art was his only happiness: his home had always been open to him, his aid always ready for him. The strong hand of the aristocrat had often raised the fame of the musician above the envy or the rivalry that had tried to crush it, and not a little of the wealth given to Lulli for his music had gone in secret from D'Orvâle, unguessed by the recipient.

"Nothing ails him," Chandos answered, wearily; his thoughts were far in other things. "But a singer has been arrested here for giving some of his music in public,—some song of freedom too free for Austria; and his heart is set on her liberation."

"Ah! I will see to that. They shall give her her liberty in twenty-four hours. The fools! Every weakness persecuted becomes strength against its persecutor when once hunted into martyrdom. And they will not know that!"

"When they do, human life will have entered on a very different phase from what we live in."

Philippe d'Orvâle flashed a quick glance on him. This wild headlong, insouciant rioter could read men like a book.

"Tell me, tell me; you have had some fresh pain,—some new wrong?"

"Scarcely; but I have had fresh temptation, and I have little strength for it."

"You always underrate your strength!"

"Not I. Sometimes I think that were impossible. We flatter ourselves we have strength, we pride ourselves on our codes, on our philosophies, on our forbearance; and the moment a spark is

dropped on our worst passions, they flare alight, and consume all else!"

"May-be! But the age rants too much against the passions. From them may spring things that are vile; but without them life were stagnant, and heroic action dead. Storms destroy; but storm purify."

"There is truth in that; but we are, at our best, half passion, half intelligence, and at a touch the brute will rise in us, and strangle all the rest. No man can wholly suppress the animal in him; and there are times when he will long to *kill* as animals long for it."

"Ay!" Philippe d'Orvâle's fair frank face flushed, and his right hand clenched; he had known that longing.

"Tell me—tell me whether to-night I was weak as a fool, or did but barren justice. I barely can tell myself. John Trevenna has been the foe of my life; you know that——"

"Know it! Yes!—a hound who turned on his master! By my faith, when I see that man in honour and eminence, I know what Georges Cadoudal meant when he said, 'Que de fautes j'ai commis de ne pas étouffer cet homme-là dans mes bras!' If there be a regret in my life, it is that *I* did not kill him where he stood laughing and taunting on your hearth, while you went out to your exile!"

"You left it for me!" There was a terrible meaning in the brevity of the words. "Well, to-night I could have had my vengeance on him, to-night I could have unearthed his villany to hold it up before the nation that takes him as a chief; to-night I know as though I saw it written before me that he betrayed me, chicaned me, robbed me as usurers rob; and—I let justice go!"

"Let it go! Are you mad?"

"That is what I doubt! I would sell my own life for justice on him; I fear I could kill him with less thought than men kill adders!—and yet I let it go. I could not reach it without forcing another to break his oath, to forswear his conscience, to sin against the only redemption of his life: what could I do?"

"Do? I would have crushed ten thousand to have struck at *him!* Tell me more."

"I cannot. It is another's secret, not my own; were it mine, you should know it. All the laws of justice and humanity bound me powerless; I could not break through them. I had honoured this man's fidelity when I was in ignorance whom it was rendered to: I could not dishonour it because I learned that it was shown to my enemy."

"Few men would have stayed for that."

"May-be! It was hard for me to stay for it. It is hard as death now! It were surely small crime to tempt any one to betray a traitor; it were but to turn against him his own poisoned weapons. One oath broken more or less, what would it be in self-defence against one who has broken thousands, broken every tie and bond of gratitude, of honesty? And yet—right is right. I could not bid another turn betrayer because I had been betrayed.

Look! to have my justice of vengeance, I must have done injustice to one placed, in his own unconsciousness and by his own trust, in my power. Which could I choose?—to forego it, or to wrong him?"

Philippe d'Orvâle lifted his lion's head with a toss of his lion's mane; his eyes rested on Chandos with a loyal, flashing, noble light.

"*Forego it!* Your vengeance were ill purchased by any falsehood to yourself."

Chandos stretched out his hand in silence; D'Orvâle's met it in a close firm grasp. They said no more; they understood each other without words: only, as they parted farther on in the lateness of the night, the prince-Bohemian's regard dwelt on him with something that was wistful for once almost to sadness,—a thing that had no place in the brilliant and heedless career of the "mad duke."

"Chandos, you were made for Arthur's days, not for ours. Those grand creeds avail nothing—except to ruin yourself. Yet you would rather have them? Well, so would I, though I am but a wine-cup roysterer."

As he spoke, the lights burning above among a sea of flowers and colours, in crescents and stars and bands of fire, shone on the leonine royalty of his head and the majesty of his height, all lustrous with the scarlet and the gold and the diamonds of his Carnival attire. There was an unusual softness in his brown, bold eyes, an unusual touch of melancholy in his voice:—that one memory of him was never to pass away from Chandos.

CHAPTER VI.

ET TU, BRUTE!

Through the brilliance of the earliest sun-dawn a gondola shot swiftly through the silent highways, with the light on the water breaking from under its prow in a shower of rippling gold, and the brown shadows lazily sleeping under the arches of bridges, and under the towering walls, as though they were loath to wake and flee before the rising of day. It was just morning; no more, but morning in all its radiance, with the scarlet heads of carnations unclosing, and the many-coloured hues warm over land and sea, with the darkness only left in the hushed aisles of churches, and the breath of the sea-wind blowing balmily from the Adriatic.

Guido Lulli, where he leaned in the vessel, saw it all with an artist's eye, felt it all with an artist's heart, and wove magical dreams of sound from the melody of the oars. Life had been but captious with him, giving him the head of a seraph and the limbs of a stricken child, the heart of a man and the frame of a paralytic, breaking his youth into weakness and torture and starvation and

strengthlessness, calling his manhood into the fame of the world and crowning him with the great masters; it had been cruel and lavish at once, taking from him all happiness, all knowledge of happiness, all consciousness of what health could mean or freedom from pain be like, all sense of "the wild joys of living" and of the liberties and heritage of manhood, taking them from him, from the hour of his birth, and making every desire of his heart an unending pang; yet—giving him in one Art, giving him with the eye, and the ear, and the temperament of genius, a sovereignty wide as the world, and a treasury of beauty that could only be closed when the touch of death should make his sight dark and his hands motionless. Others, beholding him, saw but a pale, shattered, silent cripple, with great wistful eyes, ever seeming to seek what they never found,—a man whom a child could cheat, whom a buffoon could mock, whom a stare could make nervously and unbearably wretched; but others had come to know that this man had a kingdom of his own in which he was supreme, had a power of his own in which he was godlike, and lived as far above the fever and the fret of their own lives as the stars move above them in their courses. He heard what they never heard, he saw what they never saw; and to Lulli's sublime transcendentalism the whole universe was but as one chaunt of God.

As his gondola glided now, he was looking dreamily upward: he was in Venice because the young Venetian had been arrested for singing a song of liberty from one of his operas, might be imprisoned, might be scourged perhaps, and he came to save her from chastisement, or to insist that he had a right to share it. He knew nothing of her except the fact that she had suffered through singing his music in defiance of the usurpers; but he had a lion-boldness where wrong menaced weakness, and a pure chivalrous instinct conquered, whenever it was needed, the shrinking sensibilities and the physical feebleness of this man, whom other men had called for three parts of his life—a fool. The buzz and the fret and the money-seeking crowds of the world passed by him unnoticed, unheard; he took no more heed of the stir about him than if he had been a palm-tree set in their midst, and they thought him a fool accordingly; but let one spark from the flame of wrong, one blow from the gauntlet of tyranny, fall on anything near him, and the enthusiast, the dreamer, the isolated visionary, became on the instant filled with fire and with action. And for this yet more they called him fool: the man who does not care for his own purse and his own palate, but only rouses for some alien injury, what is he but the Quixote of all ages?

As he went now, to welcome to Venice the one friend of his life, he looked up at that towering marble and the blue of the cloudless skies above. Above a lofty archway, out of an oval casement, with her arms resting on the jasper ledge, and the umber darkness behind her, so that as the sun fell full upon her face and her hair she was like one of those old master-pictures where the golden head of a woman gazes out from a black unbroken

surface of deepest shade, leaned Castalia. Her eyes were glancing above, following a flight of white pigeons whose wings flashed silver in the light; and on her face was the look, more spiritualised than any smile, more intense than any radiance, more hushed and yet more passionate than any words can paint, of that happiness which is "the sweetest vintage of the vine of life."

Lulli glanced up and saw her there, leaning down over the dark mosaics; he strove to rise, ere the boat had swept past.

"Valeria!"

As the name left his lips, reason and memory and the space of years were all as naught; he was back in the days of his youth and his poverty; he believed that his lost one lived unchanged, unaged; with the warmth of southern suns upon it, and made richer and fairer yet by that higher and softer light it wore, the face of his lost darling looked on him once more from the jasper setting of the Venetian casement. A gondola, that had followed him from his dwelling, glided up swiftly in his wake, and came side by side with his own; from the awning a woman's hand was stretched, and touched his arm.

"Signor Lulli, one word with you."

"With me? Whom——?"

"A friend to you, and to one you lost? Let us wait a moment, there in the shadow."

The speaker who had arrested him leaned from beneath her awning, her hand lying on the side of his gondola; he could not see her features, but her voice was very melodious and low.

"There was once a life that was very dear to you in the old days at Arles?"

He trembled violently. The thought of touching at last the secret buried so long overcame him, as when they come, at last, upon the gold vein, the toil-worn and heart-sickened gold-searchers are beaten with their joy.

"Dear to me? Yes, God knows! You bring tidings of Valeria?"

She whose form was lost in the shapeless folds of a Carmelite's habit, and whose face was obscured by the hood of the order, stooped from under the black shade of the gondola.

"Land; and I will tell you all I have to tell."

He obeyed her, his weakened limbs bearing him slowly and with labour up the water-stairs. Fronting them was the porch of a church,—a great, grey, dim, noble place, with marvellous carvings of time-browned stone, and feathery grasses floating from its colossal height, and Titan statues that looked blind and weary down from their niches on the water below, as though evil days had fallen on them and on their Venice.

The entrance was wide and of vast depth, a lofty cavern, roofed and walled with carvings on which countless hearts and hands had spent their lifetime's labour; and from it, in the body of the building, were seen by changing glimpses, as the air moved the vast moth-eaten fall of Genoese velvet to and fro, glimpses of twilight gloom with the ethereal tracery of the ivory pyx gleaming white

from the shadow, and the marble limbs of a crucified Christ nailed against a dark pillar of Sienna marble. She motioned him to rest on the stone bench within the porch, and stood herself beside him. He never asked her who she was; he never thought of her save as one who knew Valeria; her religious habit made her sacred in his eyes, and his soul held but one thought,—the fate of the one lost to him. His eyes sought the Carmelite's with longing anxiety.

"Speak now! Valeria?"

"Is dead."

The word was spoken very gently, but it dealt him a keen blow; though he had long said that she was dead to him,—said it in the bitterness of his soul when he had first heard of her flight to dishonour,—he had unconsciously cherished hope that some day, ere it should be too late, he would find her.

"Dead? and without one word for me! But that face yonder?—it was hers!"

His heart was full, and he spoke on its impulse; he never remembered that he addressed a stranger; he only knew that he spoke to one who might give him some link with his long-broken past. His life had been entirely uneventful, and the few things that had marked it held him for ever, as they could never have held a life of action.

"She brings you some memory?" pursued his questioner. The voice was subdued, and yet had a certain imperious command in it that would not be resisted and was unaccustomed to delay as to disobedience. The eyes of the cripple turned with pathetic entreaty upon her.

"You must know that she does, or why speak to me of her? Whoever you are, whoever she be, tell me, for the love of mercy."

"She whom you now saw is her daughter."

The Provençal's face flushed scarlet, his eyes lighted with an infinite tenderness, that flashed and darkened into the fiery wrath that had used to arise in them against the unknown lover of the last of his name.

His teeth set; his hands clenched.

"Her daughter? My God! And *he*——"

"He—led Valeria where dishonour was forgotten in recklessness, and shame was lost in diamonds and wine and evil laughter."

"His name?" It was but a whisper; yet a vibration ran through it that told without words the strength which this frail and suffering-worn cripple would find against the spoiler and polluter of the only life round which his memory, his imagination, and his heart had ever woven the fair, if the vain, dreams of love.

"Can you bear its telling?"

"I will not bear its denial. His name? and may my worst vengeance light——"

"Hush! You know not whom you curse."

"Nor care! If he live, my hate shall find him. His name?"

"Wait! Be calmer ere you hear it."

"Calmer! when her child lives there?"

"Her child knows nothing of her parentage; nor what that parentage is can I well tell. Valeria's life grew very evil."

The dark blood grew purple over Lulli's delicate features, his lips turned white as death; he suffered excruciatingly; no noble was more tenacious of the honour of his name than he.

"Speak! Who was her tempter? Who lured her first to her sin?"

"Wait! Hear her history first. She was a beautiful, heartless, wayward, unscrupulous woman, to whom honour was nothing, to whom levity and shame were sweet."

"He made her that, if ever she became it. The greater, then his crime. His name?"

"Patience: do not hasten your own bitterness."

"I hasten to end it. It can only be quenched in vengeance."

"She lived for a while in sinful magnificence; but she died in the utmost poverty, in a Tuscan village. It is a common fate."

He shook in his whole frame as he heard.

"And then you bid me withhold my curse? She died in want, after a short, shameful life of gilded vice? *No* curse is wide enough to reach him, if he drove her to that infamy."

"It was scarce his fault; she loved the fatal power of her beauty but too well. She died at Fontane Amorose: if you need a witness, it is here." She stretched out to him a small, silver, heart-shaped relic-box, worn and almost valueless, on which were rudely graven the words "Valeria Lulli." A moan broke from him as he saw it; his face grew white, his eyes filled with tears.

"Oh, God! I gave her this myself; she was a child then,—a child so beautiful, so innocent!" His voice sank, his head drooped; the sight, the touch, of the little relic struck him to the heart; the hour of its gift came back on him as though lived but yesterday,—the hour when, with many a denial of self, he had treasured up coins till he had bought the thing that had been the wish of her heart, and slung it, as his recompense, round the fair throat of the laughing child, who paid him with her kisses.

"She left it, on her death-bed, with a contadina for me. I had known her in days evil to us both. There were a few feeble lines to me with it, unfinished. The peasant kept it, telling no one of it, and thinking it of value for its holiness, till a few months ago, when the child Castalia was lost from Fontane, the woman's conscience woke, and she sent it to me. I have left the world; I am in a religious order now: thus it was long in finding me. Once received, and hearing also for the only time of this young girl's life, my first wish was to seek out you, and leave you to become, if you should choose, the avenger of the dead, the protector of the living."

The words had a pathetic and solemn earnestness. Lulli bowed his head, and pressed his lips on the silver heart.

"I swear to be both," he said, simply. "And *now*, once more, his name?"

"Her lover was—Chandos!"

A cry, such as that which men give on a battle-field, broke from him,—a cry of torture.

"It is false—false as hell!" he swore, in the agony of his passion. "No lie ever touched his lips; no treachery ever belonged to him."

"No," said the Carmelite, gently: "you are right. But Valeria Lulli was only known to *him* as—Flora de l'Orme."

The Provençal's attenuated form seemed suddenly to shrink and wither and lose all life as he heard; the name came back on his memory after long oblivion of it; he had used to hear it in those days that were gone, the name of the magnificent, reckless, extravagant adventuress who had wasted her lover's gold right and left, and given but a mocking laugh at his ruin.

"He met her in Arles," pursued the voice of his companion, with a gentle pity in its intonation. "She left Arles with him. She was known to him only by her *nom de fantaisie*. What her life became you are aware."

He scarcely heard her; his hands had clenched on the stonework; he quivered from head to foot; the flame in his eyes had died in an anguish beside which the mere fury for vengeance was dwarfed and stilled as he gazed down on the silver relic.

"O Christ! have pity. I swore my oath against *him!*"

The words were inarticulate in his throat; every fibre in him thrilled with the fire of his rage against Valeria's tempter, and every debt his life had owned bound him in fealty to the man whom in his blind haste he had, unknowing, cursed. He loved with such loyalty, such faith, such honour, such self-oblivion, as those with which patriots love their country, the one in whom he had found the succour of his existence, the giver of every earthly gift that had redeemed him from the bondage of poverty and pain; and in him he must now for ever see the foe on whom he had sworn to wreak the wrongs and the shame of the dead.

The man to whom he had held his very life a debt to be yielded up if need arose, from whose lips alone he turned for the sole praise he heeded, whose liberal and royal charity had lifted him from a beggar's death-bed into the light of the world's renown, and to whom his heart had clung more tenderly and truly in the darkness of adversity than even in the splendour of fair fortune, was the injurer against whom through the long course of so many years he had cherished his silent and baffled hate!

The dead love and the living love, the bonds that bound him to her memory and the bonds that bound him to his gratitude, wrenched him asunder,—divided,—agonized. Choosing betwixt them, he must sin, whichever he cleaved to,—be faithless, whichever he elected.

He let his head fall on the cold stone arm of the bench; he knew nothing, felt nothing, was conscious of nothing; he only seemed numbed and killed with this one thought,—the feud that rose to stand for ever between him and the man he loved with the love of the son of Saul for David.

"Oh, God!" he moaned; "and I ate of his bread, I was saved by his mercy!"

The Carmelite looked at him, then gently glided away, leaving the silver relic in his hand. He never heard her or remembered

her: he sat in the grey shadows of the church-entrance as though he were turned to stone, silent and senseless as the robed statues of the Hebrew kings that had kept their motionless vigil above, while the centuries passed uncounted, and the glory of Venetia fell.

He could not have told how long or how brief a time had swept by: he had sense and memory for nothing save the one knowledge that had come to him. The street and the church were alike deserted: nothing aroused him. He sat there as in a stupor, his clasped hands clenched above his head. The lapping of the water, the warmth of the sun, the flight of time, were all lost to him; the great pall of the velvet wavered with the wind, the gleam of the white passion was seen from out the gloom within; all was still, and he had no consciousness except his misery.

A hand touched his shoulder; the only voice he loved fell on his ear.

"Lulli! you here? What ails you?"

The Provençal started and shuddered under the touch as at the touch of flame; he staggered to his feet, his eyes looking at his solitary friend with the wild piteousness of a dog that has been struck a death-blow by its master's hand. His lips parted, but no sound came from them; he gasped for breath, and could find no words; there, face to face with the saviour of his life, with the spoiler of the honour dearer than his own, the force of the old love borne so long, the force of the old vengeance so long sworn, rose in twin strength, wrestling with and strangling each other.

Chandos gazed, amazed and touched with a vague dread: he laid his hand on Lulli, and drew him gently within the hushed aisles of the church, where the still, brown, sleeping shadow slept so darkly, only broken by the pale gleam of some white carving or the glow of some blazoned hue.

"You are suffering greatly. Tell me——"

"Tell you,—oh, Christ! How can I tell you?"

"Why not? Did I ever fail you?"

The words had the gentle compassion that he had first heard when he had lain dying among the bleak and rugged hills of Spain; the voice had ever been sweet to him as the echoes of music, welcomed as the weary drought-parched forests welcome the stealing breath of the west wind: it pierced him to the heart, it killed him with its very gentleness. He threw his arms upward, and his cry rang shrill and agonised as a woman's.

"Great God, have pity! Let my curse light on my own head! I knew not what I did!"

Chandos laid his hands upon his shoulders and held him there, in the twilight of the lofty narrow aisle, with the Crucifixion looming cold and white out of the mist of shade. His eyes looked down in Lulli's, where he stood above him, and stilled him as a dog is stilled by its master's gaze.

"You rave! What grief has befallen you?"

A convulsion shook the Provençal's frail, yielding form: he loved so utterly the life he had voted to vengeance, the life on

which in his sight rested the crime of Valeria's fall, of Valeria's shame, of Valeria's death.

"Grief! grief!" he muttered, in his throat; "it is *shame*,—black, burning, endless shame! I have broken your bread, while you wrought her dishonour; I have cursed you, when my whole life is but a bond to you for debts beyond life, above life! Which is the worst sin, the worst dishonour? *I* know not!"

"Sin! dishonour! And whose?"

"Hers, and mine, and yours."

The syllables left his lips stifled and slowly; the last two barely stirred the silence. He had honoured the man to whom he spoke then as though he were a deity; he had obeyed him as though he were a king.

"*Mine!* No other living should say that to me. Mine! And for what?"

Lulli lifted his head: his wasted, misshapen frame gathered suddenly vitality and vigour; there was the dignity of wrong and of manhood in the carriage of his head.

"For this:—you were the lover of Valeria."

"Of Valeria?"

He repeated the name mechanically: it had been unspoken between them for so long; it had scarce a meaning on his ear.

"You brought her to the pomp of vice; she died in the misery of vice. I, your debtor, lived on the alms of the destroyer of the last of my name. Valeria was your mistress,—Flora de l'Orme."

The words ran cold and clear; in the moment of their speech he had forgotten all save the disgrace that had made him the guest, the debtor, the alms-taker, of the one by whom she had been tempted into the ruin that had devoured her in her youth. Chandos stood silent, his eyes fixed on Lulli's face; back on his thoughts rushed a flood of forgotten memories,—memories of the splendid, vile, pampered beauty who had stooped her rich lips to his wine and wound the scarlet roses in his hair in many a careless, riotous hour,—memories of the night when, in the studio at Clarencieux, he had paused before the picture of Arles and been haunted for a moment with the doubt of that which he now heard.

"Valeria!" he echoed, slowly, an intense pity and contrition in the tone of his voice; "Valeria! Is it possible?"

"It is true." The musician's words had a fierce, dogged misery in them, and his hand clenched on the silver heart. "A Carmelite has given me her story. She died long ago; but her wrongs do not sleep with her."

Chandos looked at him a moment, and a great pain passed over his face. Had this man also forsaken him? He could have said that this woman had been shameless ere ever he saw her, that her heart was false as her form was perfect, that gold and luxury bought her love as it would, that she had been vain, merciless, evil, corrupt to the core; but he held his peace, since to speak in his own defence would have been to pierce and wound the cripple who still believed in her.

"If this *be* true," he said, simply, "you will not doubt my faith to you, at least? You will know that I was as ignorant as you? She came from Arles—it might have told me; but I never thought that she had other name than that by which she called herself. You know—you must know—that the vilest thing on earth should have been sacred to me had I been told you heeded it."

"I believe! Nothing but truth was ever on your lips. Yet none the less were you her lover, her tempter, her destroyer; none the less does the curse of her shameless life, of her bondage to evil, lie with you,—you alone."

He spoke hoarsely: his hand was clenched on the relic, his head was lifted, his eyes flashed, and over the spiritual fairness of his face the darkness of avenging hatred gathered.

Chandos looked at him, and a slight, quick sigh escaped him.

"You too!" he said, involuntarily. "Well, the wrong I did you was in ignorance: if it must part us, let us part in peace."

To the man who had loved him, as to the enemy who had betrayed him, he alike never quoted the claim of the past, never argued the one reproach, "I served you." But in the words there was a weariness beyond all speech, there was the *et tu, Brute*, which once had pierced even the adamant of his traitor's hate; and it cut to the heart of the hearer deep as a scourge cuts into the bared flesh; its very gentleness rebuked him with the keenest reproach that could have pierced him. His life-long debt, his subject reverence, his deathless gratitude, his loyal love for the man by whose mercy he was still amidst the living, and by whose aid the creations of his genius had been given their place and their name among men, rushed back on his memory in a tide that swept aside the passions of the hour and broke asunder the chains of his oath. He seemed to himself vile as any ingrate that ever stabbed the heart of his benefactor. The moment of supreme temptation had come to him, the test that should prove whether he was as others were,—loyal only whilst the gift of generous service bound him, faithless and without memory the instant that ordeal came. The hour was here for which he had often longed, the hour that could try the truth of his allegiance, and in it he had been wanting.

All the tenderness of his nature, all the remorse of his heart, went out in wretchedness to the man whom he had arraigned and upbraided and wounded as though no debt of life, no years of charity and pity and succour, had stood between them; he had no thought left except the sin of his own unworthiness. He bowed down at Chandos' feet, his face sunk on his hands, his supplication passionate with all the swift and mobile emotion of his nation and his temperament.

"Monseigneur, forgive me! I knew not what I said. I swore an oath before Heaven to avenge her, but I break it now and for ever, if it must light on you. Let my curse recoil on my head; let the weight of my forsworn words be on my life; let me forsake the dead and abjure my bond. Better any crime than one thought of bitterness to you! Forgive me, for the pity of God, what the

vileness of my passion spoke. If you killed me now with your own hand, you would have right. *I* should be bound to let my last breath bless you!"

Wild, incoherent, senseless, the words might be, yet they were made rich and sweet as music by the faithful love that spoke in them; they gave full recompense to Chandos for many weary years of patient faith in human life and patient forbearance with its traitors and time-servers. Against all trial, and through all suffering, the heart of this cripple was true to him; in his creeds, the one fidelity sufficed to outweigh a thousand Iscariot kisses.

He stooped and raised him gently.

"Forgiveness! It is I who must ask it. Whatever debt you think you owed me in the past, you have paid and overpaid now."

Lulli stood before him, his head still sunk, his face very white in the grey hues of the darkened aisles.

"No: there are debts which we can never pay, which we never wish to pay," he murmured, faintly. Though his fidelity had stood its trial, the trial was not less terrible to him: in the man he loved and honoured he still saw the destroyer of Valeria, the unknown foe on whom his hate so long had fastened.

"But her daughter?" he said, suddenly, as the remembrance flashed on him,—"that beautiful child,—here in Venice——"

"Here? Where?" His voice, hoarse and rapid, cut asunder the Provençal's words; his face grew livid, a hideous dread possessed him.

"The daughter she left in Tuscany,—the young girl,—Castalia."

"Hold!—O Heaven!"

Chandos staggered forward, as he had done when the bolt of his ruin had struck him: the sweat of an unutterable terror was on his brow; the agony of an unutterable guilt devoured him.

"Her daughter—*her's!*"

The words were stifled in his teeth; he could not breathe his thought aloud; the fire of a love whose very wish was nameless sin consumed him; the blankness of an utter desolation fell on him, passing all that his life had known of misery.

The Provençal watched him, paralyzed, silenced with a great bewildered fear; he swayed heavily back; guilt seemed to thrill like poison in his blood; his face was dark with the flushing of the black, stagnant veins; he reeled blindly against the sculpture of the marble Christ.

"Love between *us!* Great God! what horror!"

With the mellow flood of artificial light that still shone there, instead of the glory of the risen day, shed about her. Héloïse de la Vivarol stood before her mirror in the dressing-chamber of the Venetian palace that was honoured by her for a brief space: her haughty, delicate, regal head was lifted; the grey, heavy serge of a religious habit fell back from the brilliantly-tinted hue of her face and the still exquisite grace of her form: it was the habit she

had worn at a prince's Carnival ball, shrouding her beauty, for once, under an envious disguise and in a whimsical caprice, that she might more surely be unknown by those titled maskers with whom she had played the carte and tierce of her state-craft fence. By mere hazard, the caprice had served her well; her subtle, unerring wit was ever served well, alike by the weapons she forged and the accidents that favoured her.

Now, her glance flashed a cruel triumph at her own reflection, that was given there with the glow from the silver branches on its bright hawk eyes and on its arched, smiling, mocking lips. She had waited nigh twenty years, but she had her vengeance.

"*I* have divorced them!" she thought, "for ever,—for ever! And none can trace my hand in it, suffer as he may, search as he will."

And none ever did.

CHAPTER VII.

LIBERTA.

THERE was a great tumult rising through Venice. Swelling at the first from a distant quarter, it had been borne nearer and nearer through the silence of the city of the waters, the tumult as of a surging sea, as of the roar of sullen winds,—the tumult of a people, long suffering and launched at last against their oppressors. The sound had not penetrated the depth of the church aisles; only its low muffled echoes could reach there, and they had been unheard by those who stood in its solitude, lost in the misery of their own passions. In the clear golden morning, in the luxuriance of colour and of beauty, in the warmth of the fragrant air, in the hush of the tranquil streets, revolt had risen as it had risen in the great northern hive of labour; but here, in the "sun-girt South," it rose for liberty; there in the gaunt, smoke-stifled Black Country it rose for wages. Venice was athirst for her freedom; the north-men had been hungry for so many more coins a week.

They were but the youths whose hearts were sick, and whose lives were aimless, like the life of Leopardi, the children of eighteen or twenty summers, whose blood was kindled and whose souls were pure with patriot fire; who would have flung themselves away like dross to cut the fettering withes from their Venetia; whose ardour thought the world a tournament, where it sufficed to name "God and the Right" to conquer and to see the foe reel down; who fed their eager fancies on the memory of Harmodius and Aristogeiton, and who refused to see that the nations of their own day adored the Greeks in story, but called a living patriot an "agitator" if he failed, and sent him to the cell, the scourge, the death of felons. It was the boyhood of Venice that had risen. The past day had been an Austrian festa for an Austrian chief, and the music, the laughter,

the glitter, the salvoes of artillery, the wreaths of flowers, all the costly follies, had driven the iron deeper into the souls of those who closed their shutters to the sound of revelry, and mourned, refusing to be comforted, desolate amidst the insolence of the usurper's magnificence and mirth. The festa, following on the arrest of a songstress beloved of the city, who had been seized for singing an ode of liberty, had broken their patience down, had driven them mad, had made them believe once more, in their old sublime fatal blindness, that a pure cause and a high devotion would prove stronger than the steel and the granite of mailed might. They expiated the error as it is ever expiated; they were made the burnt-sacrifice of their own creeds.

They met with little mercy: in the sight of their foes they were but seditious malcontents, to be shot down accordingly, or pinioned alive like young eaglets taken for a caravan cage. The soldiers of Austria made swift work with them,—so swift that the hundreds who had risen with the dawn with the shout of "*Libertà*" upon their lips as with one voice, and the noble insanity of the liberator's hope beating high in their fearless breasts, were, almost ere the first echo of the chaunt had rung through the silent highways to wake the slumbering spirit of a Free Republic, shot down, cut down, well-nigh as quickly as seeding-grasses fall beneath the scythes,—were driven as the deer are driven under the fire of the guns, yielding never, but overborne by the weight of numbers and the trained skill of veteran troops, never losing their courage and their resistance and their scorn, but losing order and adhesion, and seeing their young chiefs fall in the very moment of their first gathering, seeing their long-counted enterprise, their long-watched opportunity, their long-cherished hope of union and strength and victory, fade and wither and perish under the upward course of the bright morning sun.

The tumult had been brief; the chastisement would be life-long for such as lived under the heavy iron pressure of the battalions that forced them down, through the mitraille of the balls that hissed along the brown, still waters and shook the echoes of the mighty palaces. They were young, they were nobly trained; they chose death rather than life in a prison-cell with a convict gang, than the shame of the gyves and the scourge. One band of them, some hundred, fought inch by inch, step by step, their backward passage into the great porch of the church, into the dim and solemn loneliness of the aisles, gaining breath from their enemies for a while, holding aloft still their standard,—the colours of a free Italy.

Suddenly, and with the tempest of sound without as suddenly entering there with the forcing open of the large bronze doors, they fell backward, with their faces ever to the foe, into the darkness and the silence of the edifice. The burst of clamour rolled strangely through the stillness of the avenues of stone; the conflict of the world seemed to pour like hell let loose into the sacred hush and peace; the throng of hot, heroic, fever-flushed, tyranny-wrung life, with the vivid colours of the banner-folds flung high

above their ardent, sun-warmed faces, filled as though they had sprung from the sealed tombs where the great of Venetia lay dead, the grey, cavernous gloom of the porch, the twilight of the stretching aisles, the marble space beneath the marble Christ. Crueller wrong had never sought the refuge of sanctuary, the shelter of the altar, the shadow of the Cross. But they did not come here to ask for peace, to demand protection: they came to die with their colours untouched, with their limbs unfettered.

The bronze gates of the larger entrance were forced open by their pressure in the very moment that a horror, beside which all Chandos had ever borne looked pale and painless, rose from the depths of his past to seize the one dream of revived happiness that had come to him. In the first instant that its blow fell on him, he had no sense but of unutterable loathing, of sickening despair, before the abyss of unconscious guilt that had yawned beneath him,—no consciousness but of the living love that burned in him passionate as the love of his earliest years, and the dead love that made it hopeless and forbidden and accursed, that made it a sin before which all his life shuddered and recoiled, that made each kiss of her lips poison, each word of his tenderness crime.

As the thunder from the streets smote his ear, and the flood of the daylight poured in, he was shaken from his trance of misery as men are started from a nightmare: his eyes were bloodshot, his face flushed red, his limbs shook; he was blind and deaf, he knew neither where he was nor who had spoken; but his hands fell heavily on the shoulders of Lulli, swaying him backward.

"It is false! Castalia—her child—mine! God! such horror could not be. Do you know what she was?—a shameless, loveless, profligate woman, a vampire, whose thirst was gold,—a Delilah, who stole her lover's strength to shear him of all value. Castalia sprung from *her?* It is a lie, I tell you, coined to pollute and to divorce from me the fairest thing that ever lived or loved me!"

Lulli stared fear-stricken in his face.

"Loved you?" he echoed; "loved *you?*"

"Ay, loved me as I was never loved. And you tell me a life so pure as that was born from a courtesan! You tell me that I—I——"

The words died in his throat; he could not shape in them the ghastly thought that he flung from him as men fling off an asp's coil about their limbs. He gasped for breath, where he stood there above the man who had brought this lemure from his past: there was the ferocity of a maddened beast in him.

The bronze doors were burst open; the shock of the firing without pealed through the stillness; the throng of the young soldiers poured in. They saw him,—him to whom they had rendered the homage of their song of liberty in the summer night of a few years past,—and the echoes of the vaulted roof rang again with one shout, one Viva to his name.

They knew his face well,—it had long been among them in Venice; they knew his words well, that in the poems of his early

manhood and in the deeper thoughts of his later years had borne so far the seeds of freedom; they honoured him and loved him.

His eyes dwelt on them a while without light or sense; he felt drunk as with an opiate under the storm of disbelief and sickening terror that possessed him. They filled the space about him under the crucifix that hung aloft, with the sad, passionless, thorn-crowned face of the statue bending above from out the darkness, and the white limbs stretched in martyrdom. The folds of the standard streamed above the crowd of upturned faces with the glow of their earliest manhood and the resolve of their settled sacrifice set as with one seal upon all. They had fallen in close in their ranks, and stood so still in unbroken phalanx. Alone and foremost was the youth with the head like the head of a Gabriel, who had spoken in the summer eve the gratitude of Venice to the teacher and the lover of liberty. Their weapons were in their hands, and their blood poured from their wounds on the black mosaic pavement worn by priestly feet. Some had their death-wound, and knew it; but they only pressed their hand closer, to stay for a moment the stream that carried life with it, and they looked with a smile to his face.

One—a child in years, scarcely seventeen, with the flushed fair features of childhood still—stooped and touched his hand with a kiss of homage.

"Signore, wait and see how we can die; see we do not dishonour your teaching."

The simplicity of the words pierced his heart; through the wreck of his own misery, through the sirocco of his own passions, they came to him with the weary, eternal sigh of that humanity which, however it had deserted him, he had never, in requital, forsaken. Death would have laid its seal upon his lips, and chained his hand, and veiled his sight, ere ever he would be cold to the sufferings of his fellow-men, silent to the prayer of the peoples.

That love, unswerving and unchilled, for mankind, which had given so noble a glow to the dreams of his youth and filled with so gentle a patience the temper of his later years, survived in him now amidst all the desolation of his fate, all the horror that glided from the shadows of his past and seized the one hope left him. As the heart of Vergniaud was, to the last on the scaffold, with the human life in which he had placed too sublime a faith, for which he had dreamed of too sublime a destiny, so his heart was still, even in his own torture, with those young lives self-given up to slaughter. The boy's touch roused him; he looked at the heaving mass that pressed about him, at the pale, brave faces that turned to him with one accord in the gloom of the aisle. He saw at a glance they were there as sheep are hemmed into the shambles, he divined what folly had brought them,—folly nobler, perhaps, than most prudential wisdom. He pressed forward into their van on the simple instinct of their defence, while they fell back and made way for him, watching him reverently as he passed. He had loved Venetia, he had served Liberty; he was sacred in their sight. In the front the standard caught a beam from the golden

air without, and was wafted higher and higher by the breath of a free sea-wind; behind, far in the gloom, the altar-lights burned dully, rayless in the blackness of the shadow shrouding them,—meet symbols of the clear noontide of freedom, of the midnight mists of creeds and churches. He forced his passage to where that banner floated.

"Children, children! what are you doing? Why will you spend your lives like water?"

The youths of the front file, the first rank that would receive the shock of the bayonets or the fire of the musketry with which the soldiers would in another moment come to drive them down into obedience, lowered their arms as guards lower them to monarchs.

"Better to lose our lives than spend them in usurpers' prisons! Leave us while there is time, signore; you can trust us to die well."

They left the space free,—the space out into the glowing sunlight, into the fragrant air. He stood still, and motioned their weapons up.

"You know me better than that."

Their eyes filled; he had lived much amidst them, and his written words had sunk deep into their hearts. The young patriot who held the banner—held it with his left hand, because the right wrist had been broken by a spent ball—flashed back on him an answering comprehension.

"We know the greatness of your nature—yes; but the greater your life, the less should you expose it here. There will be slaughter; the world must not lose *you*."

He heard but vaguely, half without sense of what was spoken; his life seemed on fire with the torment that possessed him,—the hideous doom from which his whole soul shuddered. Instinctively his eyes sought the musician; the look that was in them was worse to Lulli than if he had seen them glazed and fixed in death.

"Go you," he said, briefly: "I wait with these."

The flush and light that only stole there when in music he lost the feebleness and the pain of his daily being, came on Lulli's face.

"I deserted you one moment," he murmured low; "not again,—never again!"

The tramp of the Austrian soldiery came nearer and nearer, ringing like iron on the stone pavements without; the flash of metal glanced in the sun beyond the great bronze doors of Cinque Cento arabesque; the arch of the entrance was filled with dark faces and the glitter of the levelled steel; behind were the dim, solemn, majestic aisles of the church, with the white Passion gleaming through the gloom, and the ethereal tracery of the pyx rising out of the sea of shadow; in front, hemming them in with a circle of bayonets, and blocking up the lofty space through which the blue sky and the sunlit air of the living day were seen, were the mercenaries of Austria.

Some touch of reverence for the sanctuary that their Church had made sacred from earliest time to all who sought the refuge of its altars, stilled their zest for slaughter and held back their weapons;

there was a moment's pause and silence. The boy-patriots only gathered closer in their ranks, and looked out on the bristling line of rifles in the sunlight of the day. Chandos forced his way to the front, and stood between them and their foes.

"O children! why will you give the unripe corn of your young life to such reapers as these?" he said, passionately. "You serve Venice in nothing; you but drain her of all her youngest and purest blood! Why will you not learn that to contain your souls in patience for a while is to best perfect your strength for her? Why will you not believe that there is a world-wide love higher even than patriotism,—that while men suffer, and resist, anywhere upon earth, there we can find a country and a brotherhood?"

They heard in silence, their young faces flushing; they knew that he who spoke the rebuke to them spoke but what he had himself done,—that, under exile and wretchedness, he had not fled to the refuge of death, but had made of truth his kingdom, and of mankind his brethren.

"It is better to die than to live fettered!" they murmured, as they lifted their eyes to his.

"True! But when the freedom of a nation, the deliverance of a people, rest on our bearing with the chains a while, that we may strike them off with surety at the last, the higher duty is to endure in the present, that we may resist in the future. Malefactors have died nobly: it is the greater task to live so."

His voice, rich and clear with the music of the born orator, rang through the silence of the church, moving the hearts of the young Venetians like music, and stirring even the fierce and sullen souls of the German soldiery, though to them the language of its utterance was unknown. He had the power in him which leads men by the magic of an irresistible command,—the power that, in forms widely different, his enemy and he alike possessed. In the early ages of the world he would have been such a ruler as Solomon was in the sight of Israel, such a liberator and leader of a captive people as Arminius or Viriathus, when the life of a country hung on the life of one man, and fell when that life fell.

The Austrian in command, to whom his face was unknown, thought him the leader of the revolt, and wondered who this chief was that thus swayed even whilst he rebuked his followers. He lowered his sword courteously.

"Signore, surrender unconditionally, or we must fire."

Chandos stood between the ranks of the combatants, unarmed, his head uncovered,—behind him the dark hues of the paintings, within the whiteness of the sculpture and the shade of the vaulted aisles, a single breadth of light falling across his forehead and the fairness of his hair.

"I cannot dictate surrender to them, for they have done no crime," he said briefly; "and to shoot them down you must fire first through me."

The Venetians nearest him pressed round him, shielding him with their weapons, and covering his hands, his dress, his feet, with their kisses.

"Signore!" they shouted with one breath, "we will surrender to save you. *You* shall not die for us. We can find some way to kill ourselves afterwards!"

He put them gently back; his eyes rested on them with a great tenderness.

"No: you shall not surrender. I know what surrender means. Besides, it is only cowards' resort. Do you think I am so in love with life that I fear to lose it? I could not die better than with you."

As the words left his lips, through the ranks of the soldiery, through the serried lines of steel, as the men in amaze fell back before her, and she thrust aside the opposing weapons as she would have thrust aside the stalks of a field of millet, through the radiance of the day, and the gloom of the ribbed stone arches, Castalia forced herself with the chamois-like swiftness of her mountain-training and the dauntless courage that ran in her blood. Before the Austrians could arrest her, she had pierced their phalanx, crossed the breadth of the marble pavement, and reached Chandos, where he stood beneath the sculpture of the crucifix. His face grew white as the face of the sculptured Christ above, as he saw her.

"Oh, God! what love!"

Involuntarily, with a great cry, he stretched his arms out to her. At that instant a large stone, cast over the heads of the soldiery from an unseen hand behind them, was hurled through the air, and struck the colours of a Free Italy from the grasp of the youth who held them: he reeled and dropped dead: the blow had fallen on his temple. As the banner was shivered from his hold, the folds drooping earthward, Castalia caught it and lifted it in the front of the German troops. Her eyes flashed back on them with a daring challenge; her face was lighted with the glow that liberty and peril lend to brave natures as the sun lends warmth.

Then, with a smile that had the heroism of a royal fearlessness, with the fidelity of a spaniel that comes to die with its master, she came and stood by Chandos, her eyes looking upward to him, her hand leaning on the staff of the standard. Unconsciously, in the violence of the torture that consumed him at her sight, her touch, her presence, he drew her to his breast, crushing her beauty in an embrace in which all was for the moment forgotten, save the love he bore her, save the love that sought him even through the path of death.

Roused by the echo of that rallying-cry, infuriated by their comrade's fall, seeing her loveliness given into their defence, the Venetian youths sprang forward like young lions, their swords circling above their heads, their hearts resolute to pierce the net that held them, or to perish. The Austrian raised his sword:—

"Fire!"

Obedient to the command, the first file dropped on one knee, the second stood above them with their rifles levelled over the shoulders of the kneeling rank, the bayonets were drawn out with a sharp metallic clash, the double line of steel caught the morning

rays upon the glitter of the tubes: every avenue of escape was closed.

Chandos stooped his head over her, where he held her folded in his arms, to shield her while life was in him.

"You do not fear?"

She smiled still up into his eyes; she saw in them an agony great as that which the sculptor had given to the marble agony upon the cross.

"I have no fear with you."

His embrace closed on her in the vibration of a dying man's farewell.

"Death will be mercy for *us!*"

With the sunlight of her hair floating across his breast, he stood looking straight at the levelled musketry; her eyes rested on his face alone, and never left their gaze. With his arms thus about her, with her head resting on his heart, she had no fear of this fate; he wished it, he resigned himself to it; she was content to die in the dawn of her life, with him, and at his will.

Guido Lulli stood near them. He was forgotten—he had no thought that it could be otherwise; but where he leaned his delicate withered limbs on the sculpture beside him, his eyes rested calmly on the circle of the soldiery, on the gleam of the rifle-barrels; weak as a woman in his frame, he had no woman's weakness in his soul. He had forsaken the man he loved for one moment in life; he would be faithful to him through the last pang of death.

The sudden crash of the volley rolled through the silence; the white thick clouds of smoke floated outward to the brightness of the day, and downward through the length of the violated church. Castalia never shrank as it pealed above her; she only looked up still to the face above her. There was not a sound, not a moan; when the smoke cleared slightly, they stood untouched, though shots had ploughed the stone above them and beneath them; but under the white sculpture of the Passion the young lives of Venice lay dying by the score, their lips set in a brave smile, their hands still clenched on their sword-hilts. A voice rang out like thunder on the stillness:

"Brutes!—do you murder in cold blood?

Thrusting his way through the dense crowds of the entrance, as Castalia before him had thrust her's, Philippe d'Orvâle strode through the soldiery into the church, felling down with a blow of his mighty arm a rifle that was levelled at Chandos; with his hair dashed off his forehead, his glance flaming fire, he swung round and faced the German levies, grand in his wrath as a god of Homer.

"So! you turn the church to a slaughter-house? Not the first time by many. By my faith, a fine thing, to shoot down those brave children! Cowards, tigers, barbarians, fire again at your peril!"

The passion and the dignity of the reprimand stilled them for a

moment by the force of surprise; but only for that, only to rouse their savage ruthlessness in tenfold violence. Dressed, in one of his Bohemian caprices, in the boat-dress of a *barcarolo*,—for he loved to mingle with the people in their own garb and in their own manner,—and but dimly seen in the midst of smoke and the twilight of the building, they failed to recognise him; they took him for a Venetian and a revolutionist. Infuriated by his words and by his forced entrance, the Austrian in command gave the word to fire again. The volley of the second line rolled out as he stood in the midst between the soldiery and the body of the church, as a lion stands at bay; he staggered slightly, and put his hand to his breast; but he stood erect still, his bold, brilliant eyes meeting the sun.

"You have killed me; that is little. But kill more of *them*, and, by the God above us, I will leave my vengeance in legacy to France, who never yet left debts like that unpaid!"

Then, as Chandos reached his side, he reeled and fell backwards; he had been shot through the lungs.

"If it stop the carnage, it was well done," he said, as the blood poured from his breast.

Awed at their work, recognising him too late, terror-stricken to have struck one for whose fall vengeance might be demanded by a nation that never slurs its dishonour or lets sleep its enemies, the Austrians in command, motioning back their soldiery, pressed towards him, to raise him, to succour him, to protest their lamentation, their ignorance, their horror. Chandos shook them from him, and swept them back.

"His blood is on your heads: you murdered him! Stand off!"

Philippe d'Orvâle had known that his death-wound had struck him in the instant that the ball had crushed through the bone and bedded itself where every breath of life was drawn; but the careless laughter of his wit, the fine scorn of the old Noblesse, was on his face as he looked at the Austrians.

"So! brave humanity, messieurs! You apologize for shedding my blood, because my blood is called princely; if I had been a gondolier, you would have kicked my corpse aside! No, dear friend, let me lie. No good can be done, and it will be but for a moment."

A voiceless sob shook Chandos as he hung over him; he knew also that but for a moment this noble life would be among the living.

The thoughts of Philippe d'Orvâle were not of himself; they were with those children of Venice, who were perishing from too loyal and too rash a love for her. His eyes gathered their lion fire as they rested on the Austrians; his voice rang stern and imperious.

"If you regret my death, give me their lives."

The officers stood mute and irresolute: they dared not refuse; they dared not comply.

"Give me their lives!" his voice rolled clearer and louder,

commanding as a monarch's, "without conditions, free and untouched for ever. Give me them, or, by Heaven, I will leave France to avenge me. Give me them, I say!"

There was no resistance possible, in such an hour, to such a demand, they submitted to him; they pledged their honour that the lives he asked for as his blood-money should be spared.

"That is well; that is well," he said, briefly, as the rush of the air through his wound checked his utterance, where he lay back in Chandos' arms just beneath the sculpture of the Passion. "All that youth saved! No shot ever told better. Ah, Chandos! do not suffer for me, *caro*. It is a fair fate,—a long life enjoyed, and a swift death by a bullet, with your eyes on mine to the last. Dieu de dieu! what room is there for regret? I am spared all the lingering tortures of age. That is much!"

"Oh, God!—to lose you!"

The cry broke from Chandos in an anguish mightier far than if his own life had been ebbing out with every wave of the blood that flowed out on the marble floor. He had lost all else,—and, at the last, this life he loved was taken!

Philippe d'Orvâle's eyes looked up at him, tender as a woman's.

"*Chut!* If *I* be content, what matter? 'The king will enjoy his own again.' You will take from your friend dead what you refused from him living. Make my grave in Clarencieux, Chandos,—under the forests somewhere,—that your step may pass over it now and then, and the deer come trooping above me."

"Hush! hush! You kill me."

Hot and bitter tears welled into Chandos' eyes, and fell on the brow that rested against his breast: he would have accepted exile and poverty for ever rather than have bought the joys and the wealth of a world at such a price as this.

Philippe d'Orvâle smiled,—the sun-lit, careless, shadowless smile that had always been on the lips of this bright, fearless reveller, though the blood was pouring faster and faster out as his chest heaved for breath, and the chillness and numbness of death were stealing over the colossal limbs that were stretched on the marble floor.

"Nay; I tell you I am fortunate. My roses have never lost their fragrance yet, and now—I shall not see them wither. Do not grieve for *me*, Ernest; it is well as it is,—very well! Ah, Lulli! is it you?"

He stretched out one hand to the Provençal, who bent over him convulsed with the unrestrained impassioned grief of his temperament; it seemed to him strange and terrible beyond compare, that this mighty magnificence of manhood should be laid low while death passed by his own strengthless, pain-racked frame and left unsevered his own frail bonds to earth.

An intense stillness had fallen over the scene of the carnage where the prince-Bohemian lay dying in the broad space of the arched aisle; the soldiers of Austria stood mute and motionless; the young Venetians gazed heart-broken at the man who had

given his life for theirs. All those who were wounded lay as still as the stiffened dead beside them, letting existence ebb out of them with the same fortitude as his. The tumult had died; a stricken awe had come upon the multitude. Above, in the twilight of the dim vaulted vista of columns, the free colours of liberty still floated, catching a gleam of light still on their folds. Castalia held them where she stood looking down on the first death that her eyes had ever watched, as the purple stream of the blood flowed to her feet, and each breath, as it convulsed the vast, torn, heaving chest, dealt a separate pang to her as though her own life went with it.

The glance of Philippe d'Orvâle, growing more languid now, and losing the fiery brilliance of its gaze, dwelt on her with a gleam of wonder and of light.

"Who is that?" he asked, as he raised himself slightly.

She knelt beside him, holding the standard still, while its bright hues drooped on the marble.

"They call me Castalia."

He looked at her dreamily.

"Castalia! Ah! you have eyes that are like some I loved once. I loved so many,—so many! Life has been sweet,—sweet as wine. Stoop down and touch me with your lips; it will be a better assoilzement than a priest's chrism."

She lifted her eyes to Chandos, where she knelt beside him; he bent his head in silence, then at the sign from him she stooped softly nearer and nearer, and let her lips rest on the French Prince's brow in the farewell he asked.

He smiled, and touched her hair with his hand.

"I thank you, *belle enfant*," he said gently; the light was fading fast out of his gaze, his senses were fast losing all their hold on earth, as wave on wave of his life-blood surged from the broken, shattered bones of his breast. He lifted himself slightly with a supreme effort, and the sunlit laughter with which he had ever met existence was on his face as he met his last hour.

"Your foe waited for the 'Mad Duke's' death! Well, we have cheated him: he will see the rightful lord go back to his heritage. It irked me reigning there, Chandos, while *you* were exiled. No Austrian bullet ever did a better stroke. Nay! why mourn me? I have drunk the riches of life, and I am spared the gall of the lees. Your hand closer, dear friend. I do not suffer; it is nothing, nothing! Let me see your eyes to the end, Ernest. So!—that is well!"

And with these words his head fell back, and under the white sculpture of the Passion Philippe d'Orvâle lay dead.

While Venice was hushed in awe at the greatness of the victim who had fallen, and the vengeance of tyranny was stayed in obedience to his last wish, the Prince who had died for the People

was borne with reverent hands into the gloom of a state-chamber of his own palace, and laid reverently down, with the radiance of the morning shut out, and the gleam of funeral lights burning round. A pall of purple covered the limbs; fine linens veiled the breadth of the chest, with its yawning, blood-filled cavity. The face was still left unshrouded, with its fair, frank brow pale in the pallor of the wax-light, the luxuriance of the curling beard flecked with silver threads, the eyelids closed as in a peaceful slumber. There was but one watcher with him. Beside the bier Chandos knelt, motionless as the dead, with his forehead resting on the hand which in life had never clenched but in a righteous cause, and which, once clasped in friendship or in pledge, would have been cut off sooner than have let go its bond. That hand, cold as ice, and lying open like the strengthless palm of a child, had given him his home, given him more than empires; that hand, by its last act and will, had restored him the one longing of his life, had summoned him from exile to the honour of his race once more; that hand had swept aside a score of years, and brought him back his birthright. This gift of a recovered joy such as dreams sometimes had mocked him with, came to him in the very hour that a horror worse than guilt laid his heart desolate. One desire of his soul was bestowed on him in the very moment that all others were laid waste and banned as sin,—one resurrection of dead hopes granted him in the very moment that all other hopes were blasted from his hold. It was his once more, this land that he had never forgotten, this thing that he had mourned as Adam mourned the forfeited loveliness of paradise, this lost treasure to which his memory had gone, waking or sleeping, with every flicker of green leaves in morning twilight, with every sough of summer winds through arching aisles of woodland, with every spring that bloomed on earth, with every night that fell;—and it was his only when the one friend that had cleaved to him loyally was stretched dead before his eyes, only when the poison of his past rose up and turned to incestuous shame the love which had seemed the purest and the fairest treasure that his life had ever known! He knelt there, where the daylight was shut out and the stillness was unstirred as in a vault. That he had regained his birthright by the seal of eternal silence laid for ever on those brave lips that no lie had ever tainted, could assuage in nothing the bitterness of his regret; to have summoned Philippe d'Orvâle back amidst the living, he would have taken up for ever a beggar's portion and a wanderer's doom.

Where he had sunk down, with his arms flung over the motionless limbs, and his frame shaken ever and again by a great tremor as the scorch of passions that he had been told were guilt thrilled through him, a woman's hand was laid upon his shoulder. As he started and raised his eyes, he saw, in the pale silvery shadows of the death-lights burning round, the gaze of Beatrix Lennox bent upon him.

"Ah! I am too late," she said wearily. "I am always too late for good: for evil one is sure to be ready."

Her voice was very low; she stood looking not at him, but at the noble head that had fallen never to rise again, at the mouth that still wore its last smile, from which no chaunt of laughter, no melody of welcome, would ever again ring out.

Chandos rose and stood in silence also. There was too great a wretchedness on him to leave him any wonder at her coming there, at her forcing her entrance into the state-chamber where the guards without denied all comers. He thought some tie might bind her to Philippe d'Orvâle's memory: he had never known that it was himself she loved.

"He had a lion's heart, he was true as the sun, he never lied, he never broke a bond, he never failed a friend; no wonder the world had no name for him but 'Mad!'" she said, as her voice fell on the stillness of the funeral chamber. "He died but four hours ago, they say; and I—was those four hours too late. It is always so with me!"

"He was dear to you?"

"No! If he had been, do you think I could stand calmly here? But he was a superb gentleman: he died superbly. The world has few grand natures; it can ill spare them. Besides, I have much to say to you."

"Hush! not *here*."

"Yes, here. What I shall say is no desecration to his presence. He would have been the first to be told it, had he lived.

She waited some moments; then, with her face turned from him, she spoke:—

"Chandos, she whom you love——"

"Spare me *that!*"

"What! is she false to you?"

"Would to God she were, rather than——"

"Rather than what?"

He shuddered.

"I cannot tell you!"

"You must—if but for her sake. It is——"

"That Valeria Lulli was her mother."

"That is the truth! What if she be?"

"*What?* She was my mistress!"

"It is false! It is basely, utterly false!"

He caught her hands in his.

"Prove it, prove it!—and no saint was ever merciful as you——"

"I *can* prove it. Valeria Lulli gave her birth; but her father—lies there."

He drew a deep gasping breath, like a man who has escaped from the close peril of some awful death.

"This is true?"

"True as that we live."

She turned from him, that she might not see his face in that moment of supreme deliverance. There was a long, breathless silence, the silence which is a greater thanksgiving than any words can utter.

He lifted his head at last, and his eyes dwelt on her with a look that repaid her for twenty years of unspoken, unrequited love.

"Her father—*he!* Oh God!"

"Yes, it is strange. And, yet, why do we say so? Life is full of wilder mystery than any fiction fancies. Months ago, in the autumn, you bade me feel a woman's pity for your young, forsaken Tuscan. I sought for her; I wished to know if she were worthy of you. You had told me where you had left her; I went there to find her gone,—lost out of all sight and knowledge. The belief of the people and of the priest was that she had fled with you. I knew the falsehood of that, and I set myself to the discovery, first, of her history, then of herself. It took me long, very long; but at last I succeeded. Women rarely fail when they are in earnest. The priest told me, after long conferences with him, that her mother had confided to him a sealed packet, but he was never to open it unless some imminent danger assailed the child; then, and then only, he might read what it held, and act as he might see fit. She had died without confession,—died what he considered impenitent. He was a grand old man in his creeds of duty; he had never violated the sanctity of the seals to sate his curiosity or to lighten his charge of Castalia. I had less self-restraint. I persuaded him that the moment had arrived. He was very hard to convince; he considered the command of the dead woman sacred. At last, however, I overcame his reluctance. We opened the papers: from them I learned that she was the daughter of Valeria Lulli and of the Duc d'Orvâle."

"She had been his mistress?"

"No, his wife; but she had disbelieved that she was so; hence her concealment of herself and of her offspring. The account of her life is very incoherent; written as women write under wrong and grief. It is plain to see that she was passionate, jealous, doubtless of extraordinary beauty, but of a fervid, uncontrolled temperament,—one to beguile him into hot love, but soon to weary him. There are many such women, and then *you* are blamed for inconstancy! She had left Arles because persecuted by a roué. She went to Florence, and there saw Philippe d'Orvâle. He heard her voice in a mass at Easter, and sought her out. A passion, ardent as his always was, soon sprang up between them. Of course he had no thought of marriage; but she had the same pride that Guido Lulli cherishes so strongly. She would not yield to him; in the end she vanquished him. The marriage was performed privately, and remained secret. Reasons connected with his great House made this imperative for a brief while; but he kept her in the utmost luxury in a palace of his on Como, and intended shortly to announce their union. It is easy to see by her own confession that her jealous love left him little peace, and must have been unendurable to such a temperament as his; but throughout she speaks of his unvarying tenderness, lavish generosity, and sweetness of temper. It is conceivable that he went back to his old freedom when once the restless tyranny of her passion began to gall him; but she never hints that his kindness

or his affection altered. He left her once for Paris, intending but a short absence. While he was away, she received anonymous letters, telling her that her marriage had been a false one, that his equerry in a priest's guise had performed it; that he was faithless to her, and already loved another. A woman who had read his nature aright would have known a fraud impossible to Philippe d'Orvâle; but she was very young, very impulsive,—at once, as I think, weak and passionate. She flew to Paris; he had gone to stay with you at Clarencieux. She knew her cousin was there, and went thither to declare her marriage, or arraign the Duke if he confessed it false. She was his wife, but she knew so little of D'Orvâle as that! In the Park, as it chanced, the Duke was that moment riding with the Countess de la Vivarol and other ladies. She heard her husband's laughter; she saw the beautiful women he was with. She knew so little the worth of the heart she had won, that she believed all the falsehoods told her in the letters, which were most likely penned by the libertine whom she had repulsed; or by some forsaken mistress of her husband's. Her first impulse was to accuse him before all his friends, the next to flee from him and from every memory of him, and hide herself and her shame where none could ever reach her. That she did. She made her way back into Italy, where she gave birth to her child. She would not even let him know that she had borne him one. There is little doubt that the shock of what she believed his cruelty, had unsettled her reason. That the Duke sought her far and wide, though unsuccessfully, is shown by the difficulties which she relates beset her in her avoidance of discovery by him."

He heard in silence, his breathing quick and loud, his hand on the dead man's.

"Go on; go on!"

"The remainder is soon told. I read this record of a life thrown away by such blind folly, such mingling of utter credulity and mad mistrust; her marriage-ring was enclosed in it, the certificate of the child's birth, and other matters. She, of course, wrote her absolute belief that she was not his wife. I reasoned otherwise. D'Orvâle might be a voluptuary, but his honour was true as steel. A false marriage would have been a fraud impossible to him: he would never have betrayed any one. So—I sought out the evidence. Most would have gone to him. That is not my way. I have known the world too well to call the accused into the place of witness. I sought Castalia, and I sought evidence of the marriage, ere I went to her father. I found the priest who had performed the rites, with difficulty; he had joined the Order of Jesus, and was in Africa. With patience I reached every link, those who had witnessed it and all. The marriage was perfectly valid, legally recorded, though its privacy had been kept. It is easy to conceive that, with his nature, which loved enjoyment and loathed regret, when he found Valeria irrevocably lost to him, he had no temptation to re-open a painful thought by relating his connection with her. Doubtless other loves chased her memory away, though doubtless that memory always prompted his extreme

tenderness towards Lulli. That the union was strict to the law, you will see when I show you the proofs; and in all that you choose to claim for her, Castalia must be recognised as a daughter of the house of D'Orvâle."

He heard in perfect stillness, the sudden relief of the deadly strain which had been on him for the past hours leaving him giddy and speechless; he doubted his own hearing: he had touched joy so often only to see it wither from him, he dreaded this too was a dream. A thousand thoughts and memories rushed on him: that superb courage which flashed from Castalia's eyes, that imperial grace which had marked her out among the Tuscan contadini, as Perdita was marked out among the peasants of her foster-home, that pride of instinct in her which had repelled insult as worse than death,—they were the heritage in her of the man who lay dead beside him, the heritage of a great dauntless race, that in the annals of centuries had never failed a friend or quailed before a foe. His hand closed tighter on Philippe d'Orvâle's, and his head drooped over the lifeless limbs, the stilled heart that never again would beat with the brave pulse of its gallant life.

"If he were but living——"

In the first moment of a release so sudden that it seemed to break all his strength down beneath his joy, his heart went out to the slaughtered friend whose love had been with him to the last. The dignities, the titles, the possessions that would accrue to her through her heirship with the mighty race she issued from, never passed over his memory; the inheritance that he remembered in her, the inheritance that he thanked God for in one who would bear his name and hold his honour, was the inheritance of her father's nature.

"You noblest among women!" he said, brokenly, as he took the hands of Beatrix Lennox in his own and bent over them as men bend above an empress's. "How can I thank you? What can I render you for the mercy you have brought me, for the torture you have taken from my life? So vast a gift,—so unasked a service! What words can ever tell you my gratitude?"

She smiled, but the smile was very sad.

"You remember, long ago, I told you I would serve you if I could, though it were twenty years later? Well, I have kept my word; but there is no need of thanks for *that:* it cost me nothing."

"No cost! It is such a debt as leaves me bankrupt to repay it; my life, her life, will never suffice to return it."

Her eyes were very beautiful as they dwelt on him in the dimness of the darkened chamber.

"Chandos, it is paid enough. *You* will know happiness once more. It is your native sunlight; could my lips pray, they should pray that it may shine on you for ever."

And there was that in the words, as they were spoken, which told him the truth at last,—told him of what sort and of what strength this woman's tenderness for him had been.

"Hush!" she said, softly, with that weary smile which had in it more sorrow than tears. "No; do not thank me; do not say more. It only pains me. Ah, Christ! I have done so little good!"

As she spoke, into the shadows of the chamber of death Castalia entered.

She knew no cause for his long absence. She had borne the silence awhile with the absolute submission to him that mingled with the passion of her love; at last the latter conquered; she came to seek him, came to know what this barrier was which had risen up between them with the morning light. She paused as she saw him not alone. Her face was very pale; the suffering and martyrdom that she had witnessed had wrung her heart, and stirred the depths of a nature that had in it the love of liberty, and the tenderness for the people, for which her father had died; but as she waited, beyond the gleam of the funeral-lights, the royalty was on her which had seemed to rest like a crown on her young head when she had lived among the peasants of Tuscany, and had made them speak of her with a hushed awe as a fairy's changeling.

Beatrix Lennox looked on her long in silence, with a quick deep sigh; there was that in her loveliness which far passed beyond mere beauty, mere youth; and between her face and the kingly majesty which was stretched dead on the bier there was, in that moment, a strange likeness.

The heart of this adventuress, whom the world had long condemned, had thus much of rare nobility and self-forgetfulness in it; it could rejoice in others' joy, rejoice that what it had itself forfeited still lived to gladden others. It was untainted by that which corrodes many whose acts are blameless; it was untainted by the gall of envy.

Beatrix Lennox looked on this life that opened to the fulness of existence while her own was faded, that would lie in the bosom of the man she loved, that would rest in the golden glory of joy whilst she herself had nothing left but regret and remorse and the phantoms of dead years; but there was no bitterness in her; there was only a heartfelt thanksgiving for him.

"She is worthy even of you," she said, softly; then she paused a moment, looking down into the lustrous, meditative, poetic eyes of Castalia with a searching, thoughtful gaze. "You will have a great trust," she said, simply, "and a great treasure; but there is no need to say to *you*, guard both dearer than life."

Then, silently, with one backward farewell glance at the dead man lying there, she passed slowly and musingly from the chamber. Chandos followed her, and took her hands once more within his own.

"Wait. *I* do not judge as the world judges. You have come as the angel of mercy to me; you have released me from a misery passing all I had ever known. You will live in our love and reverence for ever; you will let us both strive to repay you?"

"You have more than repaid me by those words only. I have much still to tell you,—to place with you. But *she* will never see my face again. You know what my life has been!"

He stooped nearer, and, looking upward, she saw a divine compassion on his face.

"I know that it has had magnanimities many blameless lives

have never reached. Hear me. Do you think, in view of such an act as yours, I could hold a Pharisee's creed? God is my witness, there is no one whom I would more fearlessly trust with her than you, none that I more surely know would reverence her youth and leave untouched her innocence. Can I say more?"

"More! You have said far above what I merit. But what you mean cannot be. I am no meet associate for his daughter, for your wife. She must be above suspicion: she could not be so were *I* once seen beside her. No, my years have been too evil to leave me any place with hers; but they will not be wholly desolate in future, for I shall have your pity always, and, sometimes, your remembrance."

She touched his hand with her lips ere he could stay her, and hot tears fell on it as she stooped; then she went from him,—content, because she had given him happiness; content, because it had been hers to serve him.

He passed back into the chamber where the lights burned around the solitude of the dead, and his arms closed on what he cherished with a convulsive pressure as though she were just rescued from her grave. He could not speak for many moments, but held her there as a man holds the dearest treasure of his life; then he drew her to the bier, where the brave, serene face smiled on them in eternal rest.

"Your lips were the last to touch his; thank God that it was so. I have much to tell you; it is best told here. My love, my love! could you be more sacred to me, you would be so for his sake!"

That night, in the palace where the dead man lay,—the palace that, with most of his vast chieftainship, of his princely appanage, would fall to the only one who owned his name,—Guido Lulli stood before her in whose eyes the smile of his lost Valeria looked once more upon him.

"Castalia," he said, softly, "you will be very great in the world's sight; but you will not forget that your mother loved me once, when she was a bright and gracious child, and I had no thought through the length of summer days and winter nights save to make her pleasure?"

She stooped to him with that grace which, even when the ban of peasants' scorn and of a foundling's shame had rested on her, had been so proud, and had so much of royalty in it.

"Ah! can you think so basely of me as to need to ask it? My fondest reverence will be ever yours; and as for greatness, what greatness can there be like——"

"His love?" added the musician, gently, while his own gaze dwelt also on the man who had come to him as his saviour in the bleak and burning heat of Spain, when both were in their youth. "Right. *There* will be your proudest coronal; and by you, through you, some portion of my debt will be paid to him."

Chandos silenced him with a gesture.

"Hush! You paid it long ago, Lulli; paid it afresh to-day; paid it when you gave me a rarer thing than gold,—fidelity."

"Not so. There are debts that, I have told you, are too noble to be repaid like counted coin. Mine is one of them. Let it rest on me ever, ever. It will be my last thought, and my sweetest in my death-hour."

There was an exceeding pathos in the brief and simple words; with them he turned and passed from the chamber. He looked back once, himself unseen, and his face grew pale with a certain pang. The light that shone on their lives would never come to him; the lotus-lily of which they ate his lips could never touch. There was no bitterness on him, no sin of envy, no thought save a voiceless prayer for them; yet still the pain was there. No joy could ever be his own, no fragrance of Eden reach him. He must dwell for ever an exile from that golden world in which men for awhile forget that no dreams last. Had it been his to give, he would have poured on them the glory of the life of gods; but in their love he saw all his own life had missed, all his own life for ever was denied.

As he went back alone into his desolate home, into the music-room where the things of his heart were, it was deep in shade; only across the keys of the organ at the end a white pure light was streaming from the rays of a lamp that swung above.

A smile came on his lips as he saw it; to him it was as an allegory, Heaven-painted.

"Alone! while I have you?" he murmured.

The artist was true to his genius; he knew it a greater gift than happiness; and as his hands wandered by instinct over the familiar notes, the power of his kingdom came to him, the passion of his mistress was on him, and the grandeur of the melody swelled out to mingle with the night, divine as consolation, supreme as victory.

CHAPTER VIII.

LEX TALIONIS.

With the sunset a storm had broken over Venice, rolling its funeral mass for the souls of those who had died for liberty. At midnight it lulled somewhat; the thunder grew more distant, and died away in low, hoarse anger; sheets of heavy rain succeeded, and through the hot sulphurous air the wind arose in fitful and tempestuous gusts. In its violence, the Jew kept his patient vigil.

All through the day he had heard the noise of the tumult, the echoes of the firing, the shrieks of women, the clash of swords; he had heard the terror-stricken stillness that fell over the city when a great man was slain; he had heard the murmur of many tongues, that told him many strange, conflicting tales. And his heart was ill at rest; he feared for his son. Death had been abroad in the streets; death had smitten the innocent with the guilty: whom might it not have touched? As soon as darkness gave him the

safety and the secrecy that for Agostino's sake he kept, he made his way to the place where his son dwelt. He heeded neither the fury of the winds nor the beat of the rain; he thought some passing sound, some echo of a voice, some stray word borne to his eager ear, might tell him what he sought. From sunset to midnight he waited in the shadow of the stone-work, waited and listened. Darkness and light were alike to him; no sun-rays ever pierced the gloom before his sight, even when the heat of noon told him the golden glow that shone on all the world, denied alone to him and to the Legion of the Blind.

He stood and listened, his long white hair blown back in the wild wind, the rushing storm of driving rain beaten against him unheeded; he waited to hear the one step that should tell him the son he loved still lived: to know that he was near, to be conscious of his presence for one fleeting moment, were enough for the great patient heart of the Hebrew.

For these only he watched now,—watched in vain. No sound repaid him; hours had passed, and there had been nothing. The storm had drenched his garments, and his snowy beard was heavy with water; still he listened,—listened so eagerly that the caution he had exercised so long to remain unseen was forgotten as he leaned out from the shadow, hearkening in the rush of the rain for the footfall he knew so well. He forgot that the darkness which veiled the world from him could not shroud him from sight; he could not tell that the wavering light of the lamp which swung above from the doorway near fell on his olive brow, upturned as though in the Psalmist's weariness of prayer. He had worn the fetters of his taskmaster so long; he had so long borne the burden and the weight of this iron silence bound on him; death seemed so long in its coming! It took the young, the beloved, the fair, the child from its mother's bosom, the beauty of youth from the lover's embrace, the glory of manhood from its fruitage of ambition, from its harvest of labour; and it would not come to him, but left him here, poor, old, sightless, solitary, alone in the midst of all the peopled earth.

And yet there was a vague hope in his soul to-night: he felt as though death were not far from him, as though the release of its sweet pity would soon stoop to him, and touch him, and bid his bitterness cease; and ere it came, he longed to hear once more his darling's step —to feel once more near him the existence born of his dead love,—the heart to which once he had been dear. He had strength in him to be silent unto death, to accept his martyrdom and bear it onward to his grave, untold to any living thing: all he asked was to listen once to a single living echo of his lost son's voice. Through the hush of the midnight the beat of oars trembled; a gondola grated against the stairs. It came,—that sound which thrilled through the rayless darkness which was ever around him, as it never trembled on any ear whose sense was linked with the power of sight,—that sound of Agostino's voice, as it spoke to the boatmen,—that sound which was the sole joy left to the blind. His son came towards him nearer and nearer up the wet stone

steps; he leaned forward, knowing not how the light shone down on his face, and an unspoken blessing trembled on his lips in the tongue of the patriarchs of Judea: if he died to-night, he would have prayed with his last breath for the son of the love of his youth.

The footfall paused: it was beside him now, so close that he could hear every breath. A loud, wild cry broke through the night. Agostino staggered back, white-stricken, ghastly as Saul in the cave of Endor. A moment, and he gazed there paralyzed with spectral awe, with superstitious horror; then, unwitting what he did, senseless, and breathless, and prostrate, he fell down at the old man's feet in the supplication of his childhood.

"Father! father! dead or living, for the love of God forgive me!"

The Hebrew stood above in the flickering shadowy light; and on his face there was the strife of a terrible conflict. All his soul yearned to the man flung there in that passionate prayer at his feet: yet for his very sake he must deny him!

"I do not know you," he said, and his voice trembled sorely. "None call *me* father."

There have been heroisms far less noble than this one heroic lie.

Agostino looked up, his face all flushed with warmth, his eyes alight with bewildered, questioning amaze; the voice, once heard, bore back a thousand memories of by-gone years. The words might deny, but the voice blessed him.

"Forgive me!" he implored, scarce conscious of what he said, but remembering alone the sin with which he had wrung the old man's heart so long ago in the days of his boyhood,—the sin which had pursued him ever since. "Whether you come to me in spirit or in life, come only to me in pardon, by the love you bore me!"

The Hebrew stood mute and motionless, his tall and wasted frame swaying like a reed, his face changing with swift and uncontrollable emotions, under the force of the imploring conjuration. His sightless eyes gazed instinctively down upon his son; but their blindness gave them, to Agostino, a look unearthly and without sense.

"Father! speak, O God!" he cried, "or you will kill me!"

The infinite love restrained in him broke through the rigid fixity of the old man's set features as the sun breaks through the darkness of a winter dawn; his hands were stretched out seeking to touch the beloved head lifted to him; he could hold his silence no more,—no more be as one dead to the son who knew him still.

His answer trembled, tender beyond all words, through the sighing of the wild winds and the rush of the beating rain.

"Agostino! my child! what have *I* to pardon? Rise, rise; guide my hands to you; let my arms feel you ere I die! You have your mother's face, and I cannot behold it; I am blind!"

In the dim light of the chamber within, kneeling at the old man's feet reverently as ever Isaac knelt at the feet of Abraham, Agostino heard his father's history, — heard quivering with

torture, his breath caught by sobs, his kiss touching the withered hands that were to him as the hands of a martyr, great tears in his eyes that never left their gaze upon those in whose darkness he could still read love. He heard to the end. Then, when he had heard, he wept convulsively; the torrent of his agony loosened.

"You have borne this martyrdom through him! this curse for his sake?"

"Silence! His name is sacred to me. My son, he had mercy; he spared you."

Agostino sprang to his feet as an arrow springs from the bow.

"Spared *me?* Oh, God, you have thought that?"

The old man bent his head with the patient dignity with which he had ever borne the burden laid upon him.

"He spared you; yes! For it I bless his name. My life mattered nothing."

"Spared me? He cursed me from my youth up!" his voice rang as steel rings: the bondage of half a life was broken at last. "He loosed me from the law's chastisement to break me down into slavery worse than the worst tortures the sternest law ever dealt yet. He let me escape a moment to fetter me for an eternity. He traded in my misery; he traded in my crime. He set me to do the vilest work, and, when I shrank from it, threatened me with my buried sin. He made my life one endless dread; he never let me know one moment's peace, one hour's security. Ah, Heaven! why do I speak of it as past! He does it still. I am his tool, his serf, his hound. Every day I wake, I know that I may rise only to be commanded some fresh infamy to serve him!"

The old man, as he heard, rose also, and stood erect; his sunken eyes filled with the fire of his dead manhood, his mouth set like a vice; years of living vigour, of mighty strength, seemed poured into his veins: his olive face was dark as night.

"What? he was faithless to me? You have suffered?"

"Suffered! It is no word for what I have borne through him. But what is his crime to me, beside his crime to you? I was guilty, I merited my punishment; but you,—you who endured indignity and torment for my sake and for his, you who had no error, save too firm a loyalty to him, too noble a tenderness to me!"

His voice fell in a deep tearless sob; he had the heart of a woman, and his father's sacrifice was holy in his sight as any martyrdom.

"He has been your tyrant?"

The question was hard as iron.

"*Mine!* what matters that? It is nothing beside *your* captivity!"

"Yes! By it my bonds are loosed; by it my oath is broken. He has had my patience long, my truth long, my servitude long; now he shall have my justice."

His whole height was erect, his blind eyes blazed with fire, his arm was outstretched in imprecation; he stood like one of the

prophets of his own Palestine, cursing in the name of Jehovah a hostile host, an ingrate land.

Agostino, looking upward, caught the same fire from him, caught the kindling glow of liberty and of revenge. He had writhed and rebelled under his own bonds, though ever only to sink more hopelessly under the fetters; but before the martyrdom of his father there rose in him that nobler rage for another's wrong which would have made him content to perish himself, if in his fall he could have dragged down his tyrant: it is the emotion which makes tyrannicides.

"Ay!" he cried passionately, "let us be avenged if the power be still with us. Let him shame me, ruin me, kill me; but let me see him struck down ere I die. His guilty secrets have been the curse of both our lives; let them be told against him! *I* was impotent; but you——"

The figure of the aged Hebrew towered in the gloom, and on his face was the stern ruthless justice of the Mosaic law.

"As he dealt with us, so will I deal with him; there is no bond with traitors. An eye for an eye, a tooth for a tooth. It is just. Go! fetch the man he strove hardest to destroy. He is in Venice; bring him here."

The weaker nature of his son trembled as he touched, at last, the liberty, the atonement, the avenging blow for which he had so long thirsted. The slave had been a slave so long, he trembled before the daring that would loose his chains.

"But only to have shared such infamy was so vile! I cannot bear that *he* should know us its accomplices——"

"Silence! What matter? We were beasts of burden; we carried what loads our master laid on us,—dead men or blood-stained weapons. Go; bring him quickly!—quickly! Do you hear?"

An ashen hue stole over the bronze of his face, his lips were pressed in a straight line under the flowing of his beard, his hands moved with a swift impatient movement. Angostino looked up at him in fear.

"Father! wait. You are too weak."

The old man's voice rang, stern and imperious, across his own.

"I shall be strong to do this ere I die. Go to him; tell him I will give him his vengeance. Go to him; I command you—bring him here."

The inflexible command brooked no disobedience; it swayed his listener with the old force of the Jewish parental power. Agostino was once more the youth before his father's might, under his father's hand. He dared dispute no longer.

The old man sat, and waited. Moments seemed hours to him; the flame of his life was burning low, he dreaded lest it should die out ere it should have time to shine upon his vengeance and light the fires that would devour his tyrant's fame and crumble it to ashes in the sight of men. His pulse beat faintly, his heart was oppressed, his limbs felt chill as ice; but he had said that he had strength in him to do this thing ere he passed away among the

vanished crowds; and he sat there with his ears straining eagerly, his lips braced, his whole force strung, to keep him in the powers of thought and speech and memory, on which his hold was now fast slackening.

His son knelt near him; he had sent the bidding to the one whom it summoned, and he crouched near like a beaten dog. For the moment, he had panted to break his bonds at any cost; but the vehemence of that impulse had its reaction; he felt sick with shame, he trembled with dread: the whip had done its invariable, inevitable work; it had made the spaniel a coward to the core. Moreover, he loathed his own sins; he held himself viler than the harshest judge would ever have held him, and he feared unspeakably the sight of the man who had cleaved to honour at all cost, the man whom he might have saved, had he but had the courage to risk a personal peril.

Where the Hebrew sat with his head bent forward, his hand clenched on the wood-work near him, his quick hearing caught a distant sound; his lips moved eagerly.

"He comes! Bring him,—bring him quickly! Let me speak while I can!"

Agostino started to his feet, and staggered out, at the imperious command,—out into the gloom of the stone passages. From the wild night without, Chandos entered. The storm had risen afresh, the lashing of water and wind had beaten on the black sea-piles, the darkness of the hot tempestuous air was impenetrable, the rains were pouring down in torrents; through the tempest, heedless that his hair was drenched and that the lightning scorched his eyes, he had come, with but one memory on him, with but one hope,—his vengeance.

Passionate as his love was, dear as his heritage, closely as he had cloven to a barren honour through barren years of bitterness, he would have been capable in that instant of throwing honour and heritage and love away, if by them only he could have purchased this one thing. No life so utterly and so surely attains strength, that it may not give way and fall at the last; no life is so absolutely free of baser passions, that when the slaughter-lust is on it, it may not reel headlong into crime.

As he entered, with the glow of passion upon his face, on which the grief that the day had borne and the light of recovered happiness mingled, there was in him the beauty that the Spanish lad had likened in the days of his youth to the golden-haired sovereign of Syria; and as Agostino saw him, involuntarily, unconsciously, he threw himself at the feet of this man, whose wrongs he had shared in silence through the pusillanimity of a selfish terror; he abased himself there as Eastern slaves before their rulers.

"Forgive me, if you can! I can never forgive myself. I was like one who sees a murder done, and will not raise his voice to stay the lifted blade, lest it be thrust into his own throat instead. I loved you, honoured you,—though your eyes never fell on me but twice in my boyhood—and yet I never told you where the assassin hid."

Chandos forced him upward by sheer strength; light flashed from his eyes, his lips parted with fevered eagerness, his whole frame thrilled with one desire alone.

"I see who you are; I see what you know. If you can give me vengeance, there is no guilt on earth *I* will not pardon you. Vengeance, I say! Give me but JUSTICE, and it will beggar the widest vengeance that men ever took. Your father sent for me: lead on,—quick!"

The softness of his love, the bereavement of the noon, were alike flung off him as though they had no place in his life; the world held nothing for him save this only,—a lifetime of wrong, left unavenged so long.

Agostino looked at him in one fleeting look; then the crouched, shuddering, beaten shame came on him that had moved him when in the oak-forest he had seen the hopeless melancholy of the face that he had once known brilliant as the Spanish sun that had shone on them when they had first met. He had lived in the world, he had made fame, he had carried himself fairly before men; but he had been but a slave, and a slave's weakness and prostration were in his nature for ever.

He gave a heart-sick, shivering sigh.

"Ah, *you* may pardon, but I cannot pardon myself. You have known calamity and desolation; but you have never known the worst pang of all,—to be disgraced in your own eyes!"

Even in that moment the anguish of the accent reached and touched his hearer. He turned and looked an instant on the face that he had once seen in its boyish grace, with the hot amber light of Granada upon it.

"He who feels disgrace so keenly is on the surest road to leave it behind him for ever. Now, lead on,—quick, for the sake of Heaven!"

The wax-like, flexible, impressive nature of the Castilian Jew was awed and stilled by the might of the avenging power he had summoned. He led the way in silence,—led him into the great chamber where the blind man sat, lonely and old and poor, but grand as the sightless seer of Chios.

The light from above beamed on the massive bronze of his forehead and on the snow-white falling beard. His eyes strained into the gloom they could not pierce; he rose at the sound of the footstep, and stood erect as the Prophet of his own rabbinical tale, when he rose to bless the Israel whom his taskmaster had bade him curse.

"Come hither," he said, briefly, and his voice gathered the force of his manhood. "You craved a perilous thing, and I refused it; the lust is mine now, and I will yield you what you sought. 'He who rises by the sword shall perish by the sword:' it is just. You shall deal with him as by the law of Moses:—'every man shall be put to death according to his sin.' Come hither and listen while my lips have still speech."

Where Chandos stood against him, his face was eager with a fiery hunger, flushed and set with a mighty passion; his breath caught in quick gasps.

"But—your oath?"

The bond was not his, yet he remembered the sanctity of the vow that had been in his path as a rock.

His slight ironic smile wavered an instant over the Jew's stern mouth.

"Sir, you are thrice a madman! You guard other men's honour as well as your own, even to your own hindrance. Be at rest. My oath is broken justly. It was sworn for so long as my son was saved by him. He has cursed my son; I am released. Traitors shall be slain by their own weapons. I was silent and faithful whilst I believed silence and fidelity due. He has been false to me; the bond is rent by his own hand. You said aright in the night that is past; he whom I served was your enemy."

The oak-wood of the bench on which his hands were clenched broke like a reed in Chandos' grasp as he heard. He had known this iniquity ere yet it had been told; but its utterance fell on him like the stroke of an iron mace. His foe's life, had it been by him in that one moment, had not been worth a moment's purchase; it would have been broken asunder as the strong rail was snapped in his hands.

"Tell me all," he said, briefly.

"Sir, to tell you all the iniquity that *I* wrought were to speak for a score of years, and I shall not live as many minutes," said the Israelite, in his grave, caustic satire. "'When thou cuttest the harvest in the field, leave a sheaf for the fatherless,' said the law. Well, we kept the law so well that we sheared the last wheat-ear from every land in our reach. 'No man shall take the millstones to pledge; for he taketh a man's life to pledge,' the law has written. Well, we obeyed so well that we took the millstones and ground the life to powder between them. But, of all that we wronged, we wronged you most. You had had mercy on him when he was a debtor and wretched; you had given him food, and shelter, and comfort, and friendship, and the smile of the world; and in payment he wrung your life dry of all wealth and all peace, as men wring a skin dry of wine."

He paused; life was flickering dully and feebly in him. Chandos shook with rage where he heard.

"Do you think I have not known *that*? More,—more! To be told my wrongs is no vengeance."

"Patience. Your vengeance lies in them. Your enemy never broke the laws of his land; he was too wary in wisdom: he plundered, but he plundered within the statutes. The worst felons are those who can never be brought to the bar. He persuaded you to waste your substance; he drew it—much of it—into his hands; but it was always you who signed your own death-warrant. I have had your signatures by the hundred; the sums they signed away were cheated from you, because lies were told you of their use and their purport; but you were very careless in those matters, and he was very able. There is not one of them that is forged; they were all legal, though they were villanies."

"Oh, God; is he never to be reached, then?"

It rang out from him in a loud cry, like the cry of a drowning man from whose hands the last plank slips.

"Patience! Have I not said you shall have your vengeance and mine? You cannot bring him to the felon's dock, but you shall gibbet him in the sight of the nations; you shall rend his robes asunder; you shall tread his crowns beneath his feet. Half —nay, a tithe—of what I can tell would suffice to drive him out in shame and cover his head with ignominy. The breath of his life now is to be untainted before the country that holds him a chief; lay bare his corruption, and ruin will blast him, he will fall, stricken to the roots."

His breath caught, his cheek grew ashen; the strength was dying in him, and the stagnant course of his blood was nigh ceasing for ever; but he had a ruthless will, he forced life back to him, and his words rang clear as a herald's menace.

"Let me say the chief thing first; my breath will fail ere you know one-thousandth part. Briefly, take my signet-ring, here, to one of my people in Paris,—Joachim Rosso, a worker in silver, —in the street where you found me. At that sign, bid him give you the sealed papers he keeps for me. He knows nothing of what is in them; but he has guarded them for me many years. He is a good friend and faithful. In them you will find the record of all I have no strength to tell you,—the proofs of the trade that your foe and I drove in men's necessities. This Englishman, my bondmaster, was very keen, very wise; and when he held me by my son's danger and by my own gratitude, he held me by iron chains; he knew he could trust me to suffer anything and keep silence.—But"—his sardonic smile passed over his lips—"he dealt with a Jew, and the Jew could meet the fox with a fox's skill. He had heavily weighted me into slavery; and while I believed him true to the lad, my tongue should have been rooted out rather than be made to utter one syllable against him. But a Jew's life is lived only to cheat, they say; and I outwitted even my tyrant so far. I kept papers he never knew; I compiled proofs he never dreamed. Had he been true to me in his dealing with Agostino, they would have been burnt by Joachim the day that I died. He broke faith with me; I turn the blade of his own knife against him; I net him in the threads of his own subtlety."

There was the sternness of the Leviticus law in the words as they rolled out from the hollow chest of the sightless man where he stretched his hands in imprecation.

"As he sowed, so let him reap; as he dealt, so let him be dealt with; as he filled his unjust ephah with ill-gotten wheat, so let the bread he has made thereof be like poison to consume him!"

The fierce unflinching justice thrilled like a curse through the stillness of the chamber.

Chandos' hand closed on the signet-ring; his face was very white, and through his teeth his breathing came with a low hissing sound, as though the weight of the evil of his traitor lay like lead on his chest.

"One word;—my ruin was worked by fraud?"

The Hebrew bent his head, and the red shame that had before come there in the sight of Chandos flickered with momentary warmth over the bloodless olive of his cheek.

"Sir, I duped men without a pang of conscience. I have said I was very evil. My work throve in my hands so well because I was without one yielding or gentle thing in me. But when we duped *you*, even I shrank. You trusted him so utterly, you were such a madman in your generosity, such a fool in your lack of suspicion, so noble in your utter weakness of carelessness and faith! And I knew what you had served him, fed him, sheltered him,—that you trusted him as a brother. When you were drawn down into our bottomless pit, even *I* abhorred the work!"

"There *was* fraud, then?"

His voice was hoarse; the syllables slowly panted out; till the life of his foe was wholly in his power, he felt as lions feel when cage-bars hold them from their tormentors.

"Fraud?—surely! But I doubt if the law could touch it: it was deftly done. He led you on into a million extravagances; he blinded your sight; he cheated you utterly. You set your name to your friends' bills, and we bought those bills in, and then we wrung the money out of you; you signed what you thought leases and law trifles, and you signed in reality what made you our debtor for enormous sums. You gave him blank cheques; when he filled them up to pay for your pictures, for your horses, for your mistresses' jewels, he drew his own percentage on them all. You gave him fatal power over your properties, and he undermined them. Yet I doubt if, at this distance of time, you could arraign him for fraud. You disputed nothing then; you could scarce dispute now, after the lapse of so many years. It was viler work than murder; he killed you by inches; he drained your blood drop by drop; he made the earth under your feet a hollow crust, and at his signal the crust broke, and you sank into the pit that he had dug. But he kept within the law; he kept within the law!"

There was a world-wide sarcasm in the acrid words; he had known so many criminals—great men in their nations—whose crimes were never guessed, because "within the law!"

"But what matter! See here." His withered fingers grasped like steel the arm of the man he had aided to rob. "In my papers you will find the whole detail of our business system. You will find the list of the men we helped to ruin. You will see how he stripped bare to the bone the friends whom he fed, and drove, and laughed and jested with. You will see how the chief of his riches was made,—how in real truth he was but a usurer, who churned into wealth the needs of his associates in the world that he fooled. Tell the tale to the world; it will blast him for ever. Show how the man you succoured repaid you. Let them behold the first steps by which their favourite rose to his power; trace the vile subways by which he travelled to dignity. Point to the dead, the exiled, the cursed, whom he dwelt with in friendship while he drove his barter in their shame and their want. Go and unmask him; go

and condemn him. You will find proofs in my legacy that will brand him your destroyer and theirs. Go! though he be brought into no felon's dock, you will scourge him, dishonoured for ever, out of the land where he stands now a chief!"

The deep, rich voice of the Hebrew rolled out like an organ-swell; the vitality of manhood was lent for a moment to the wasted powers of age. Faithful through all ordeals to his very grave, he turned in his death-hour to stamp out the traitor whom in that hour he had found false to his bond.

Chandos stood beside him, his lips parted, his eyes filled with fire; his face was dark with the passions of that bloodthirst which had risen in him.

"Dishonour him! dishonour him!" he said, in his ground teeth. "If I slew him, I should be too merciful!"

There was silence for a while in the chamber; they who heard knew the width and the depth of his vast wrong, knew that no chastisement his hand should take could be too deadly. The old man's white head sank, his hands trembled where they were knitted together.

"And forget not that I wronged you equally,—that I forged the steel that pierced and wove the net that bound you! To-night my soul will be required of me; it is dark with evil, as the night is dark with storm. Could it be free of your curse, I could die easier."

Chandos stooped to him; and his voice, though the fire of his hate burned in it, was hushed and gentle with pity.

"My curse! When you succoured what I love? When you render me my vengeance? *Not* equally did you wrong me; you never ate my bread, you never owned my trust. Your martyrdom may surely avail to buy your pardon both from God and man."

The large, slow tears of age welled into the Hebrew's sightless eyes; the hard, brave, ruthless nature was stricken to the core by the mercy it had never yielded; he lifted his hands feebly, and rested them on the bowed head of the man whom he had wronged.

"May the desire of thine eyes be given thee, and thine offspring reign long in the land! May peace rest on thee for ever! for thou art just to the end,—to the end."

Purer blessing was never breathed upon his life than this which his spoiler and his foe now uttered.

Then, as the darkness that had veiled his sight so long was lost in the darkness of death, the old man stretched his arms outward to his son, seeking what his silent unrequited love had found at last only to lose for ever.

"Nearer to my heart! nearer,—nearer. God cherish thee!—God pardon thee! Ah! will any love thee as I have loved? Death is rest; yet it is bitter. In the grave I cannot hear thy coming, I cannot hearken for thy step!"

And, with his blind eyes seeking thirstily the face so well beloved, on which they could not look, even to take one farewell gaze, a deep-drawn sigh heaved the heart that had been bound under its

iron bonds of silence for so long, the weary limbs stretched outward as a worn wayfarer's stretch upon a bed of rest, and, in a hush of stillness as the tempest lulled, the long life of pain was ended.

CHAPTER IX.

"KING OVER HIMSELF."

THERE was a great banquet in the City of London,—a banquet held chiefly in honour of the brilliant statesman, the popular favourite, who had quelled the riots of the North with so fearless a courage, so admirable an address,—who was the key-stone of his party, the master-mind of his cabinet, the inspirer of his colleagues, the triumphant and assured possessor of that virtue of Success which vouches for, and which confers, all other virtues in the world's sight. The gorgeous barbarism, the heavy splendour, the ill-assorted costly food, the ponderous elephantine festivity, were in his honour; the seas of wine flowed for his name; the civic dignities were gathered for his sake; the words he spoke were treasured as though they were pearls and rubies; the great capital crowned him, and would have none other than him.

These things wearied other men; this pomp, so coarse and so senseless and so repeated in their lives, sickened most whom it caressed as it caressed him; but on Trevenna it never palled. The rich and racy temper in him never lost its relish for the comedy of life; and the vain-glorious pleasure of his victories was never sated by the repetitions that assured him of them. The *Ave Imperator* was always music on his ear, whatever voices shouted it; the sense of his own achievement was ever delightful to his heart, and was never more fully realized than when there were about him those public celebrations of it,—the feasting and cheering and toasting and servile prostrating which to most statesmen are the hardest and most hateful penalty of power, but in which he took an unflagging and unaffected pleasure with every fresh assurance of his celebrity that they brought him. His part in the mighty farce was played with the elastic vivacity, the genuine enjoyment, of a jovial humourist; it had no assumption in it, for it was literally incessant amusement and infinite jest to him; and the good humour, the mirth, the vitality with which he came over among the people, and went through all the course of public homage and public conviviality, were but the cordial expression of the temper with which he met life.

To-night, at the civic dinner given in his honour, all eyes turned on him, acclamations had welcomed his entrance, no distinction was held sufficient for such a guest, and compliment and tribute and reverential admiration were poured on him in the speeches that toasted his name and quoted his acts, his fame, his ever-growing strength, his master-intellect, his place in the councils and in the

love of the nation; and he enjoyed with all a wit's keen relish the verbiage and the hyperbole and the cant, and enjoyed but the more for them the ascendency he held, the fearless footing he had made, the ambitions crowned to their apex, and the future of ambitions even higher yet, which had come to the force of his hand, to the compelling of his genius. Of a truth he was a great man, and he knew it; he had brought to his conquest such patience and such qualities as only great men possess; he was a giant whose tread was ever certain, whose eyes ever saw beyond his fellows, whose armour was ever bright, whose grasp was ever sure. It was natural that on the breathless, pushing, toiling weaknesses of the Lilliputians around him he should look with a Rabelaisan laugh, with a Sullan contemptuousness of unflinching and unsparing victory.

The banquet ended early; for a measure of considerable moment was passing,—a measure framed and carried through two readings by himself, and its third reading was to take place with the present night. The crowded feast had given him all the idolatry and applause of the City of London,—given it with wines, and massive meats, and soups, and sauces, and gold plate, and interminable speeches, as is its custom in that strange antithetical relic of barbarism which must gluttonously feed what it intellectually admires; and from it he went to the arena of his proudest conquest, to the field in which it is so hard to keep a footing when against the wrestler is flung the stone "adventurer,"—to the place where many mediocrities pass muster, but where a combination of qualities the most difficult to gain and the most rarely met in unison can alone achieve and sustain a permanent and high success. If any had asked him to what crown among his many crowns he attached the proudest value, he would have answered, and answered rightly, to the sway that he had mastered over the House of Commons.

As he drove to Westminster, the carriage rolled past the statue of Philip Chandos at which, going and coming from the councils of his country, he oftentimes glanced with the sweetness of his attainments made sweeter by the look he cast at that colossal marble, which he would banter and talk to and jeer at with that dash of buffoonery which mingled with the virile sagacious force of his nature as it has mingled with many a great man's acumen.

"Ah!" he murmured to himself now, with a cigar in his teeth, as he caught sight of it in the gaslight, "the Mad Duke's been shot in a brawl, they say,—in the only end fit for him. *I* will have your Clarencieux, now. Crash shall go the old oaks, and we'll smelt down the last Marquis's coronet into a hunting-cup for *me* to drink out of; my hounds should have their mash in it, only the nation might think me insane. Is there anything you particularly loved there, I wonder? If there were, it should be flung in the fire. The great hall was your beggared successor's special pride. Well, we'll burn it down when I get there,—by accident on purpose! A flue too hot will soon lay its glories in ashes. *Tout vient à point à qui sait attendre.*"

All things had come to his hand, and ripened there to a marvel-

lous harvest; but even the exultation of success and the gravity of power had not charged in him the woman-like avidity of hatred, the grotesque rapacity of spoliation, which he still cherished against the inanimate things of gold and silver and stone and wood which had been the household gods of the race he cursed. It remained the single weakness in a steel-clad life.

As he entered the House, to which he had once come on suffrage, and which he had made the scene of as complete a triumph as the perseverance and the ability of man ever wrung from hostile fortune and hostile faction, all eyes turned eagerly on him. There was the murmur of welcome and impatience; the benches were all full, at midnight, with a crowded and heated audience. His measure had been received with a vehement partisanship, violence in opposition, violence in alliance; and his coming was watched for at once with irritation and anxiety. He made his way to his seat, cool, keen, bright,—as he would have gone alike to be crowned as a king or to be hanged as a scoundrel. Moments of emergency were the tonics that he loved best, the wine that gave the fullest flavour of his life; and none could have arrived to him that would ever have found him unprepared,—none save one which to-night waited for him.

Other members had risen as he entered, but there were loud imperious cries for his name; the Commons were in one of their turbulent tempers, when they riot like ill-broke hounds, and they would have none other than the man who had learned to play upon their varying moods as a skilled hand plays on an organ. He had brought his measure through the tempestuous surf of two readings; it was now for him to ride it through the last breakers and pass it into the haven by which it would become law. It was thought strangely careless that he should be late on such a night; but this was the temper of the man,—to be daringly independent at all hazards, and to take his revenge on a party that had been glad of him, but that had never fairly relished his alliance, by caprices which made them wait his pleasure, which kept them ever uncertain of his intentions, and for which his popularity gave him full and free immunity.

As he rose to speak, the winged words paused on his lips, his eyes grew fixed with a set, astonished gaze; he stood for a moment silent, with his hand lying on the rail; his glance met that of Chandos.

Among the nobles and the strangers who had come down to listen to the debate, he saw the form that he had once seen senseless and strengthless on the wretched pallet in a Paris garret, where he had watched the throbbing of the heart under the naked breast, and had thought that he would have well loved to still it for ever with an inch of steel, had not a wider torture been found in letting it beat on to suffer. The burden of the years seemed fallen from Chandos, and to him had returned, though saddened and grave with thought, and with a melancholy that would never now wholly pass away, much of the proud, sun-lightened beauty of his early manhood. The vivid sweetness of passion was once

more his; the inheritance of his fathers was recovered; the might of avenging justice had been given to his hand; above all, *he was an exile no more.* He looked as he had looked in the days of the past.

The animal thirst to kill, of which he had spoken, had risen; his veins seemed to run fire; there was a wild triumph in his blood even while the heart-sickness at his traitor's baseness was upon him. It was his to avenge, to chastise, to pay back a lifelong wrong, to unmask a lifelong infamy, to hurl his foe from the purples of power and point out in the sight of the people the plague-spot on the breast of the man they caressed. It was his, this vengeance which would cast his traitor down, in the midst of the fulness of life, from the height of his throned successes. It was his at last, this power denied so long, which should pierce the bronze of his enemy's laughing mockery and shatter to dust the adamant of his invulnerable strength. It was his at last, this avenging might which should reach even the brute heart that had seemed of granite, callous to feel, impenetrable to strike. And he felt drunk with it as with alcohol; he felt that its worst work would never plough deep enough, never blast wide enough.

"O God," he thought, "how can vengeance *enough* strike him? None can give me back all that he killed for ever! 'Just to the end.' He shall have justice,—the justice of the old law,—a 'life for a life.'"

And, as their eyes met, the chill of the first fear his life had ever known passed over Trevenna; a vague, shapeless horror seized him; he knew that never would the disinherited have returned to his forsaken land unless the doom of banishment had been taken from him, unless some power of all that he had been dispossessed of had recoiled back into his grasp. For the moment—one brief, fleeting, uncounted second—he stood paralyzed there, the unformed dread, the venomous hatred in him making him forgetful of all, save the eyes that were turned on him, eyes that seemed to quote against him the whole history of his life. He had no conscience, he had no shame, he had never known what fear was, and he had ascended to an eminence from which he would have defied the force of the world to eject him; and yet in that single instant a terror scarce less keen, less ghastly, than that which an assassin would feel at sight of the living form of the prey he had left for dead, came on him as in the lighted assembly, in the midnight silence in which his own words were awaited, he saw the face of Chandos.

It passed away almost as instantaneously as it had moved him; the bold audacity, the dauntless courage, the caustic mirth, the mocking triumph of his temper re-asserted themselves; instantly, ere any others had had space to note the momentary pause, and the momentary paralysis which had arrested the eloquence on his lips and chained his gaze to the features of the man whom he had wronged, he was himself again; he recovered the shaken balance of his priceless coolness; he looked across the long space parting him from his antagonist with a full, firm, laughing insolence in the sunny bravery of his blue eyes; his voice rolled out on the

hushing murmurs and the broken whispers of the great gathering, mellow, resonant, far-reaching as a clarion, clear as though each syllable were told out on a silver drum.

The man he hated was before him; the man in whom he had seen incarnated all the things against which his life had been arrayed, all the wrongs that he had cherished till the cockatrice brood had bred a giant's vengeance; the man whom he had hated but the more, the more he injured him; the man whom he best loved, of any in the world, should see the eminence, the power, the sovereignty which he—the adventurer, the outsider—had aspired to and won. Chandos was before him, witness of his sway, spectator of his triumph, hearer of his words. He swore in his teeth, even in that moment when their glance first met, that oratory and triumph and sway should never be so victorious as they should be to-night; that he would fight as he had never fought, that he would win as he had never won, that this chamber should ring with acclamations for him as it had never yet rung with them, favoured and crowned there though he was. The one whom of all others in the breadth of the empires he would have chosen as the beholder of his fame fronted him. To Trevenna the hour was as it was to Sulla when the great desert King whom he had conquered and weighted with chains, and brought from the golden suns and royal freedom of his own warm land to the bath of ice of the Tullianum, stood fettered to behold the ovation given to the welcomed victor of the Jugurthine War.

To Trevenna it was the crown of the edifice that his own mighty patience and unresting brain had raised out of the dust and ashes of a banned and nameless life, when into his own arena, before his own idolaters, the man in whom the whole passions of that life had seen their deepest hate embodied came to behold his triumph. Though he should have died for it with the dawn, he would have made that night the night of his supreme success, or perished. There was in him the temper which in old days made men take oath to their gods to gain the battle, though they should, as its price, be cast headlong to the foe. In that moment he rose beyond egotism into something infinitely grander; in that moment, however guilty, he was great.

And he spoke greatly.

The fire of personal hate, the weakness of personal triumph, did but serve as spur and as stimulant to the genius in him. To know that the eyes of Chandos looked on him was to lash his strength into tenfold performance; to know that Chandos heard his words was to form them into tenfold eloquence. It was not only to invective, to rhetoric, that he rose; but the brilliance of thought, the closeness of argument, the fineness of subtlety, the vastness of memory, were beyond compare. Men who had held him a master ere this listened breathless, and marvelled that even they never had known what his power could be. Wit, reason, learning, raillery, wisdom, and logic were pressed, turn by turn, into his service, and used with such oratory as had rarely rung through that chamber. He was what he had never been; he surpassed all that he had ever achieved;

and when his last words closed, thunder on thunder of applause rolled out as in the days when Sheridan bewitched or Chatham awed the listening and enchanted crowds. Once his eyes flashed on Chandos as the cheers reeled through the body of the House; no other caught that glance in which the victory of a lifetime was expressed.

He to whom it was given saw it, and his head sank slightly; darkness gathered over his face; the thought of his heart was bitter, less in that moment for himself than of mankind. He thought, "How great, to be so vile!"

That night was the proudest of John Trevenna's triumphs.

The bill passed, carried by an overwhelming majority, which secured stability to the Treasury benches and sealed the trust of the nation in them. If he had been high in men's fame and favour before, he was unapproached now, as on their tongues through the whole of the late night his name and his genius alone were spoken. For it had been genius to which he had risen, genius that had given the fire to his words, the persuasion to his speech, the resistless force to his command, that had borne him out of himself into that loftier power which makes of men as they listen the reeds that sway to the wind of the magical voice,—genius that had wakened in him under the consciousness of one glance that watched, of one ear that heard. And for once, in its pride and its dominion, caution and coolness slightly forsook him; his eyes glittered, his forehead was flushed, his smile laughed as one warmed with wine, as he went out to the night.

As the air of the dawn blew on his face, his shoulder was grasped by a hand that forced him forward. Chandos' words were spoken low on his ear:—

"Out yonder!—come in peace, or I shall forget myself, and deal with you before the men you fool."

Trevenna gave one swift glance upward. Though bold to the core with a leonine courage, he shrank, and quailed, and sickened. That one glance told him more than hours could have spoken. He felt as though a knife had been plunged and plunged again into his heart, seeking the life and draining his blood.

"Lead on!" he said, between his teeth; "lead on, whatever you want. You and I need not waste pretty words, *beau sire*."

He felt the hand that was on his shoulder clench closer and closer till it tightened like an iron clasp. In the darkness, through the throngs, under the fitful glare of the gas, the pressure of that hand forced him away out of the masses and the noise and the tumult of the streets, down into the quiet of the cloisters, where the grey beauty of the Abbey rose in the haze of the starless mists of earliest dawn.

Then, where they stood alone under the darkling pile, that clasp loosed its hold and flung him backward as men fling snakes off their wrist. Chandos faced him in the dim grey solitude; the passions that had been held in rein whilst he watched for his foe broke loose as he stood alone with the man whose present held so proud an eminence, whose past he had traced into such sinks of villany.

whose favour was so sightless in the nation's sight, whose guilt had been so vile to net, and pierce, and drain, and rob, and ruin him.

"You have fooled your world for the last time to-night; with another day it will know you as you are,—you usurer who traded in your friends' worst needs!"

The words cut the air like the cords of a scourge lead-weighted. In that instant it was all he could do not to stamp out under his feet the life before him, as men tread out an unclean beast whose breath is poison. Ere the words were spoken, Trevenna had known that the day of his retribution had come to him,—a day his acumen had never foreseen, a day his skill had never forecast. One glance had told him that his prey had changed to his accuser, that the man he had exiled and beggared and reviled had come back to take his vengeance. For a moment the sickness of the despair that he had often dealt, and often laughed at, blinded him, and made the pale shadow of the stormy dawn reel round him: the next, his blood rose before peril, and his wit grew but keener in danger. He planted himself firmly, with his arms folded across his chest.

"We need not waste pretty words, but we need not use such ugly ones," he said, coolly. "If you called me out to talk libel, why—there are courts in which you'll have to make it good. You always *were* bitter about my success; but you needn't be tragic. You're savage, I suppose, because the Mad Duke's dead, and I shall get my way and buy up Clarencieux for auld lang syne!"

Chandos' hands fell once more on both his shoulders, swaying him back, and holding him motionless there, as they had held the frail form of the musician under the marble Crucifixion at Venice. In the gloom his eyes burned down into his foe's; his face was darkly flushed and mercilessly set, as though it were cast in stone: the muscles swelled like cords upon his arms and throat. He could have strangled this vampire that had drained all the best life of his youth!—the worst chastisement that he could ever wreak was so tardy, so tame, so vain, so ill-proportioned, beside the vastness of his wrongs!

"Speak one more lie, and I shall kill you. Clarencieux is mine; but for your infamy, I had never lost it. Silence!—silence, I tell you, or I shall choke you like a dog! The Jew who was your victim and your tool confessed all to me in his dying hour. Not a thing in your life is hidden from me; not a thread in your network of villany has escaped me. You are free of the law, perhaps,—you were too wise to break it in the letter; but the world shall know you as I know you; the world shall be your judge and my avenger. I will give you justice,—pure justice. I will unmask you as you are, and leave the rest to follow. The men you ruined, the friends you traded in, the usuries that made your wealth, the frauds you worked under a legal shield, the treacherous, shameless, accursed trade you drove in the lives of those who trusted you and fed you and sheltered you,—I shall leave my vengeance to them; they will repay it more utterly than I could now if I laid you dead, like the snake you are!"

Where Trevenna stood his bright and fearless face grew white

as a woman's, a tremor shook him as the wind shakes a leaf, a cold sweat was dank on his forehead: he answered nothing; he was too wise to dream of vain denial, too bold still to betray terror; but he knew that he had fallen into the power of the one living man whose most merciless vengeance would be but sheer and simple justice; he knew that the serpent of his unsparing hate had recoiled and fastened its venomous fangs into his own veins; he knew that the antagonist who stood above him, holding him there in that grasp of steel, would speak no more than he had power to work out to the uttermost letter; he knew that from that hour, at Chandos' will and choice, the magnificent superstructure of his proud ambitions would crumble like a toy of sand, and the bead-roll of his riches and his dignities wither like a scroll in fire under the scorch of shame. The agony and desolation of a lifetime were pressed into that one instant, which seemed eternity.

Yet the courage in him neither cowed nor pleaded.

"It is easy to put lies in dead men's mouths!" he said, with his old insolence; "and Jews have borne false witness since the world began. It will take a little more than a vamped-up slander to unseat *me*, mon beau monsieur!"

Chandos swayed him to and fro as though he were a child. The voice, the glance, the presence of his enemy maddened him; he feared the work of his own passions; he felt drunk with the delirium of hate and wrong.

"Silence!—if you care for your own life,—you traitor, who ate my bread and betrayed me, who took my shelter and robbed me! The commerce you drove in men's miseries, the friends you netted into your bondage, the thefts that made up your wealth, the secrets you stole to trade in, the slaves you ruled with your tyrannies,—I know them; with another day, the world will know them through me. Listen! All the evil you churned into gold with that dead Hebrew for your tool, all the years that you throve on that barter of men's disgrace and men's fears, all the iniquities that went to make up your rise into wealth, all the tortures you dealt on the servant who served you so faithfully, when, to screen your own crime, you sent him out in old age among felons, all the shame and the sin of your past, I know, and can prove to disgrace you for ever. I warn you; I will not have so much likeness with you as to steal on you, even in justice, like a thief in the night; but—as God lives—if the law fail to give me redress, I will so blast your name through all Europe, that the foulest criminal who hides for a murder shall be held to be worthier than you,—you who slew like Iscariot, never knowing Iscariot's remorse. Sum up the lives you destroyed; they will be your accusers, they will be my avengers!"

The breathless magnificence of the fiery wrath was poured out on the hush of the night; the moment in which every joy and power he had possessed had been struck down by his enemy's hand was dealt back at last, as with one blow he shivered to the dust the honours, the dignities, the ambitions, the victorious and secure successes of the career that had so bitterly mocked, so mercilessly cursed, his own.

Trevenna staggered slightly, and an oath of prurient blasphemy was crashed through the locked firmness of his clenched teeth. He saw at a glance how he had been given over to his antagonist's power; he knew without words how out of the multitude of his unmatched successes one rope-strand had given way and dragged the whole superb edifice of a life's labours with it. He never denied: he was too keen to sham a guiltlessness that would have availed nothing save to render him contemptible; he never gave a sign of terror: he was too bold not even in that moment to retain his courage. But he laughed,—a hard, rasped, bitter laugh, that sounded horribly on the silence. In that instant of supreme peril, of utter desolation, the keenest pang to him was not even his own extremity, his own shame, but was the restoration of the disinherited to the land of his birth and of his love; it was stranger still, though part and parcel of his nature, that the cynic humour of his temper found a broad farcical mockery of himself in the ruin that recoiled on him in the hour of the most splendid domination his genius had ever yet attained.

He saw that the man he had wronged knew how he had wronged him; he saw that enough had been told of the ruined lives which had been the stones to upbuild the stately temple of his celebrity and his eminence, to drive him out for ever a dishonoured outlaw; but he laughed for all that, and his eyes, glittering like blue steel through the mists, met those of Chandos without flinching.

"Life's a see-saw; I always said so. Are *you* going to ride atop again? Scarcely fair; you fooled away such lordly chances!"

"I fooled away my faith, and gave it to a liar and a trickster, who took my hand in friendship while he stabbed me in the back!"

"Damn you! I hated you; I never said I didn't. I cursed you 'in your uprising and your downlying,' as the 'man after God's own heart' cursed *his* enemies."

"And why? How had I ever wronged you?"

"Did you never guess?"

He spoke with the snarl of a bulldog at bay; an agony was on him as intense as the worst torture he had ever dealt to others; but the firmness of his attitude never changed, and his voice, though bitter as gall, never shook.

Chandos' eyes dwelt on him with the kingly scorn with which the eyes of Viriathus might have looked upon the traitor lieges who sold him for Roman gold to Roman steel.

"You ate my bread, and betrayed me; it was enough to beget your hate."

Wider rebuke no words ever uttered.

Under them, for the instant of their utterance, a red flush burnt in Trevenna's face, a pang of shame smote a shameless heart. The memory of both went backward to that distant time when no gift had been too great for the royal largesse of the one to lavish on the other, whose only coin of requital had been—treachery.

"Well, that *was* enough, — more than enough. We're all cuckoos at soul, and kick out those who feed us. But my hate went further back than that. I hated you when you were a child,

and I trampled out your sweetmeats in the street. I hated you when I was an ugly young clown, and you rode with your servants after you and your gold hair a-flying in the wind. I hated you when you were a baby-aristocrat, when you were a boy-patrician. I hated your laugh, and your voice, and your womanish beauty; and I swore to pull you down and get up in your place. I cursed you then, as I curse you now!"

The intense virulence that ran through the words left no doubt of their veracity.

Chandos, where he stood, gazed at him mute with amaze; to his own knowledge, he had never beheld this enemy of his whole life until the days of his young manhood, when with his gold he had released from a debtors' prison one who had proved the tempter and destroyer of all he owned on earth. This animosity that stretched out to the childish years of his bright infancy stole on him like the cold, clinging, sickly coils of an asp.

"Are you a madman?" he said, under his breath. "In my childhood!—how could I wrong you then?"

Trevenna looked at him doggedly, with a red sullen fire in his blue eyes, like the angry flame in a mastiff's eyeballs. It was deadly as death to him to part with that one secret,—the secret of his life.

"Answer me! answer! or, by God, I shall do worse to you! Why was it?"

"Because I was your father's bastard!"

The reply left his lips very slowly; to him it was as the drawing of a jagged steel out of a deep festering wound.

His listener fell back as though a shot had struck him, his face death-white, his eyes dilated with abhorrence.

"Great God! *My* father's!——"

Trevenna laughed,—a short contemptuous laugh.

"Ay! why not? You dainty gentlemen never remember your illegitimate sons and brothers that are flung off to go to hell as they will; but they may crop up awkwardly in spite of you. They are unowned mongrels, banned before they're born; but they've the same blood in them as you have."

Chandos breathed heavily; a sickening loathing was upon him.

"It is false! false as your own life!—a fraud vamped up to cover your own villany. You have no bond of blood with mine!"

"*But* for that bond of blood, you would have been free from me. I have as much of your ancestry in me as you have."

The words were dogged, but they bore truth with them. Chandos lifted his arm with an involuntary gesture to silence with a blow the lips that claimed kinship with him.

"You hound! you dare to say that Philip Chandos——"

"Was my father just as much as he was yours. Curse him and his memory both! Pshaw! You can strike me if you like; I only say the truth. Look here. I loved my mother; I never loved anything else;—even mongrels love their dams, you know!—and she was one of your father's mistresses. He paid her off

when he married a Duke's daughter,—paid handsomely, that I don't deny, but she neither forgot nor forgave, and she trained me to avenge her. She used to take and show me you in all your grace and your luxury, and she would say in my ear, 'There is your father's heir: when you are both men, make him change places with you.' I was taught to hate and destroy you, as other boys are taught their prayers. I did it thoroughly, I fancy. I 'd vengeance for a foster-nurse, and sucked hate as Caligula sucked blood: both Caligula and I took to the milk kindly! I had as much of the famous 'Clarencieux race' in me as you had; and you had all the gifts of the gods, while I was a nameless cross-breed cur, only bred to be kicked to the streets. *You* won the chariot-race, while the people shouted, 'A patrician!'—*I* was sent out to wrestle with the base-born in the Ring of Cynosarges. Well, I swore with Themistocles to drag in the Eupatrid to wrestle with the Bastard, and teach him that the Bastard could throw him. Don't you know *now* why I hated you?"

Chandos stood silent, livid, breathless; this endless hate borne to him from his birth up seemed to press on him with a weight like granite; this kinship claimed to him by the traitor, whose guilt he would have compassed heaven and earth to have exposed and have arraigned, revolted him with a loathing horror.

"Why?—why?" he echoed, mechanically. "No!—you are only viler than I knew before. What wrong had I ever wrought you?"

"How had Abel wronged Cain? By having the favour of earth and heaven!" said Trevenna between his teeth, that were still tight-shut. "I hated you because I was not as you were. Every good you did me, every gift you gave me, every liberality that marked you the noble and I the adventurer,—you the patron and I the debtor,—only made me hate you the more, only made me swear the more to tempt and hunt and drag you down, and see your pride in the dust, and your heritage given to the spoilers, my brilliant, careless, kingly *brother!*"

The word hissed through the stillness of the dawn with the lust of a Cain centred in it. If a word could have slain, that word should have slaughtered.

Chandos shivered as he heard it,—such a shiver as will pass through the bravest blood when the gleam of an assassin's knife flashes out through the gloom. The bond that his vilest foe claimed to him seemed to taint and shame him with its own pollution.

"This cuts you hard? Come! I have some vengeance yet, then. You can't break our kinship! But—you are just; you will be just to me," pursued Trevenna. "I knew that I had the making of a great man in me, and I was born into the world cursed beforehand as a harlot's son whom every fool could jibe at. I knew that I had the brain and the strength and the power to reach the highest ambitions, and I found myself clogged at the starting-point with the ton-weight of bastardy. I was shut out from every fair chance, because my mother had worn no gold toy

on her finger; my whole existence was damned, because a bar sinister stretched across it. The blot on my birth, as idiots call it, was the devil that tempted me; and no gifts and no good faith of yours could touch me while you remained what I envied: they only made me hate you the more, because now and then they burned down into what cant will call Conscience. I hated the world; I hated your order; I hated your race and your house, and all things that were yours. I swore that I would win in the teeth of it all; I swore that I would conquer, cost what it should. I was guilty, you'd say; pshaw! what of that? 'He who wins is the saint; he who loses, the sinner.' What did I care for guilt, so long as I once had success? I proved the mettle I was made of; I carved my own fortunes; I trod down my own shame under foot so that none ever guessed it; I vindicated my own rights against all the world. I triumphed: what else mattered to me!"

There was a certain dauntless grandeur in the words, despite all the shameless hardihood, the brutalized idolatry of self, that ran in them; his means had been vile, but his indomitable resolve had its element of greatness, and the hour of his direst extremity could not make this man a coward. There was that in the words which, foul as they were to himself, touched Chandos to the same passionate regret for this vileness of nature that ran side by side with this splendour of courage, as had moved him when he listened to the genius of the traitor whose secret villanies he came to unmask and avenge.

"Oh, Christ!" he cried, involuntarily, "with so much greatness, how could you sink into such utter shame? Why have hated and tortured me? Why not have trusted me?"

For the moment, over Trevenna's face a softer, better look passed, though it died instantly. This man, whom he had wrought worse work on than murderers do, knew the depths of his iniquity, and yet had a noble regret for him!

"*Why!* Don't you know what hate is, that you ask?" he said, savagely. "Oh, I don't lie to you now, because you have got me at last in your power! I would not recall one thing in the past if I could. You suffered: I would suffer a hell myself to know that. You have your Clarencieux back? Well, that is more bitter to me than the shame that you threaten. But you will never have back the years that I ruined!"

Chandos moved to him with a sudden impulse, as a lion moves to spring.

"Are you devil incarnate? God! Can you face me now and think without one pang of remorse of all you robbed from me for ever? My wealth, my treasures, my lands, were as nothing; it was the years that you killed, the youth that you murdered, the faith that you withered, that you can never restore! I would forgive you the gold that you stole, and the riches you scattered; but the life that you slew in me,—never!"

He turned away; he was sick at heart, and he could not bear to look on the face of this man who had betrayed him as Judas betrayed, and now claimed the kinship of blood.

Trevenna placed himself in his path.

"One word. You will take your vengeance?"

"I will have justice. You know its measure!"

"Very well! I thank you for your warning. I shall be dead before the sun rises. I do not wait for disgrace while the world holds an ounce of lead in it."

It was no empty menace, no stage-trick of artifice, no piece of melodrame: it was a set and firm resolve. He who had counted no cost all his life through to attain triumph, would not have counted a death-pang to escape defeat.

Chandos' face was dark and weary beyond words, as the paleness of the early dawn shone on it.

"You will end a traitor's life by a suicide's death? So be it: so died Iscariot."

Trevenna said nothing either in prayer or plea; he stood with a bold, dogged determination on the features that had a few moments ago flushed with victorious pride and lightened with a glow of intellect. He was made of too tough a courage, too bright a temper, to know a coward's fear of death; and death to him meant only annihilation, and conveyed no thought of a possible "hereafter." Yet, as he felt the course of the brave blood through his veins, the strength of the virile life in his limbs, as he felt the might and the force of his brain, and the power of his genius to achieve, an anguish passing any physical pain or poltroon's terror came upon him.

"To kill all *that*, while fools live on, and beget fools by the million!" he said, ferociously, in his ground teeth.

It was the man's involuntary homage to his own intellect, his irrepressible longing to save, not his body from its dissolution, but his mind from its extinction. It was a suffering that had its dignity; it was a regret far higher and far nobler than a mere regret for the loss of life.

Chandos stood silent, his face white and set. He thought how mercilessly his foe had done his best to stamp out all intellect and peace and power from his own existence,—how brutally he had doomed him to perish like a dog in the years of his youth, in the brilliance of his gladness. Trevenna would have but the fate himself that he had dealt with an unsparing hand. It was no more than justice, tardy and insufficient justice, take it at its widest. He lifted his eyes, and turned them full upon his betrayer.

"Did you ever remember that with *me?*"

The one reproach struck a throb that was near akin to shame from the mailed callousness of Trevenna's conscience; but his gaze did not flinch.

"No," he said, sullenly, "I never did. I would have killed you a thousand times, if you could have died a thousand deaths. *You* are right enough; I don't deny it. You only take blood for blood."

"I do not take even that. I but give you to the world's chastisement, that the world may know what it harbours."

"Call it what name you like! Words matter nothing. You will

have your vengeance,—a swift one, but a sure. See, here, Ernest Chandos. You know what I am, what I have been. You have seen how I could keep hold of one purpose through a lifetime; you have seen what eminence and what power I have gained in the teeth of all arrayed against me. And you know, as we stand here to-night, that I will never live for one taste of Defeat. I don't complain; I don't plead,—not I! You are acting fairly enough. Only put no disguise on it. Let us understand one another. You will take your vengeance, of course, since you have got one; but you may be sure as we both live to-night that you shall only find my dead body to give to the public to kick and to strip. That's all. It is good Hebrew law,—a life for a life. You've fair title to follow it. Only, know what I mean to do; I shall die in an hour."

There was no quiver in his voice; there was no tone of entreaty: he spoke resolutely, coolly; but to the uttermost iota he meant what he said, and his own death was as sure as though he had plunged a knife in his entrails. Chandos shuddered as he heard. All his life through, the web of Trevenna's subtlety had encompassed him, and it netted him now. He had a justice to do, in which the rights of the world met the rights of his own vengeance; and by it he would drive out this man, who claimed the same blood as his own, to a suicide's grave, by it he was made to stand and to feel as a murderer! He knew that the hour which should find his traitor self-slaughtered would be but late and meet chastisement of a lifetime's triumphant guilt; and the burden of that slaughter was flung on his hands, so that, giving to justice its course and its due, he was weighted with the life that through justice would fall.

"So be it!" he said, in his throat; "if you die for your crimes, what is that to me? Murderers die for theirs; your brute hatred has been viler than any murderer's single stroke."

"Perhaps so! Well, you can hang me, when I am dead, as high as Haman; but you shall never pillory me *alive*. You give me my death-warrant, and I dare say it's just enough; only remember it's the blood of the man that lies yonder you shed, and *but* for that blood you had never had my hate or my envy. You are just; you'll be just even to me, and put so much down to the credit side when you tell the world of my wickedness. Farewell! If you are to reign again at Clarencieux, tell your heir, when you have one, that the Bastard of your House beat you hollow till he was betrayed by a Jew's fluke, and that even when he was beaten he showed himself still of your cursed race, and died—game to the last."

There was not a touch of entreaty or of shrinking in the firm, contemptuous words; he laughed shortly, as he ended them, and turned away. The caustic mirth, the ironic audacity of his temper, found a terrible satire in his own fall, and triumphed still in the thought of how long and how proudly he had vanquished the race against which he had pitted himself.

Chandos stood motionless; his forehead was wet with dew; he

breathed heavily in the grey twilight, out of whose mists the beauty of the great pile where his father's ashes lay rose dim and shadowy, and mighty as the dead it guarded.

"Just to the end."

The dying words of the Hebrew's blessing came back upon his memory. Which was justice?—to yield up the traitor to the death he merited and the obloquy he had earned, or to remember the birth and the breeding that from its first hour had stained and warped the strong tree which without their fatal bias might have grown up straight and goodly and rich in fruit? Vengeance lay in the hollow of his hand, to slay with or to spare. With the dawn this man would perish,—perish justly in late-dealt retribution for a long career of guilt, of treachery, of base and pitiless hate. He merited a felon's death; let him drift on to a suicide's!

Trevenna stood a moment, in his eyes the red, angry fire of a chained hound still burning, but on his close-braced lips no tremor, —all the courage, all the insolence, all the resolve that were in him summoned to meet the awful chastisement that had suddenly fallen upon him in the plenitude of his power and his pride.

"*Beau sire,*" he said, with that pride of intellect which in its arrogance was far above vanity or egotism, "there is not one of your haughty line who will beat the mongrel for power! You and your people were born crowned; but I have won *my* diadem out of the mud of the sewers and in the face of the whole world set against me. You have nothing so grand in all your princely escutcheon as that. Pshaw! if a dying Hebrew had not turned virtuous and played king's evidence, I'd have had my grave by Philip Chandos yonder, and been even with him to my death. You have a fine vengeance at last. Few men kill as much brain as you'll kill in *me!*"

He motioned his right hand towards the Abbey, and turned away,—to die before the dawn. The action was slight, and had no supplication in it; but it was very eloquent,—eloquent as were the words in their contemptuous self-vindication, their insolence of self-homage.

Chandos involuntarily made a gesture to arrest him.

"Wait!"

The word had the command of a monarch in it. His head sank on his hands, his whole frame quivered; one who had brotherhood with him went out to lie dead with the breaking of day.

"Oh, God!" he moaned, in a mortal suffering. "I cannot send you to your death; and yet——"

And yet—his whole soul clung to the justice that would strike the traitor down in his crime: half a lifetime of torture claimed its meet requital. To spare this man passed his strength.

Trevenna mutely watched him without a sign of supplication, but with an acrid, ruthless hate,—the hate of a Cain who saw his brother rise from the murderous blow that had struck him to the earth, and deal back into his own heart the fratricidal stroke.

Chandos stood with his head dropped on his chest, his breathing loud and fast; to let go his vengeance was harder than to part with his own life. The wrongs of years that seemed endless in their desolation bound him to it with bands of iron. Yet he knew that, if he took it, his foe would die ere the sun rose,—die in his guilt, cursing God and men, as he had once bidden his own existence end.

There was a long, unbroken silence.

A justice higher, purer, loftier than the justice of revenge stirred in him; a light like the coming of the day came on his face. He remained true to the vow of the days of his youth, and, though men had abandoned him, he forsook not them nor their God. He was king over himself,—sovereign over his passions. He lifted his eyes and looked at his betrayer; there was that in the gaze of which Shakspeare thought when he wrote, "This look of thine will hurl my soul from heaven!" It spoke wider than words; it pierced more deeply than a death-thrust.

"I give you your life," he said briefly; "learn remorse in it if you can! Go,—and show to others hereafter the mercy you need now."

The words fell gravely on the stillness. Over his enemy's brow a red flush of shame leaped suddenly, his firm limbs trembled, he shook for a moment like a reed under the condemnation which alone bade him go and sin no more. Of mercy he had never thought; as he had never known it, so he had never hoped it. It pierced and beat him down as no revenge could ever have power to do; under it he suffered what he had never suffered. While their lives should last, he knew that bond of pardon would be held unbroken: and for once he was vile and loathsome in his own sight.

"*Damn you!*" he said, fiercely, while his white lips trembled, "you are greater than I at the last! For the first time in my life I wish to God I had not harmed you!"

In the savage words, as they choked in their utterance, was the only pang of remorse that John Trevenna had ever known.

In the vast shadowy space of the porphyry chamber Chandos stood, with the lustre of starlight sleeping at his feet, and the glories of his race made his once more. In the silence, that was only broken by the dreamy distant sound of many waters, he looked upon his birthright,—looked as the long-banished alone look on the land for whose beauty they have been an-hungered through a deadly travail, for whose mere fragrance they have been athirst through the scorch and solitude of desert wastes.

Every sigh of forest leafage came to him like a familiar voice; every breath of woodland air touched his forehead like a caress of one beloved; the odour of the grasses, as the deer trod them out, was sweet to him as joy; the free fresh wind seemed bearing back his youth; the desire of his eyes was given back to him; the passion

of his heart was granted him. He gazed, and felt as though no gaze were long enough, on all for which his sight had ached in blindness through so many years of absence; and, where he stood, with the life that he loved folded in his arms and gathered to his heart, his head was bowed, his lips trembled on hers, his strength broke down: the sentence of severance fell off him for evermore.

Through the hush of the night a murmur like the sough of the sea swelled through the silence,—the murmur of a great multitude whose joy lay deep as tears. It was the welcome of a people.

The sound rose, hushed by the death which had given them back their lord, through the stillness of the night, through the endless aisles of forest, reaching the halls of the great race whose sovereignty had returned and whose name was once more in the land.

Where he stood, they saw him; his eyes rested on them in the soft shadows of the night, and his hands were stretched to them in silence,—a silence that spoke beyond words, and fell in turn on them, upon the vast throngs that looked upward to his face, unseen so long, upon the strong men who wept as children, upon the aged who were content to lay them down and die because the one they loved had come to them from his exile; and that hour repaid him for his agony.

He had dealt with his enemy, and reached a mercy that the world would never honour, laid down a vengeance that the world would never know. No homage would ever greet his sacrifice; when death should come to him he must fall beneath the stroke with that victory untold, that foe unarraigned. He would see his traitor triumph, and lift up no voice to accuse him; he would behold men worship their false god, and hold back his hand from the righteous blow. But through bitterness he had cleaved to truth, through desolation he had followed justice, and while men forsook him he had remained constant to them, constant to himself. He had followed the words of the Greek poet; he had been "faithful to the dreams of his youth," and peace was with him at the end.

In the hush of the night, with the sanctity of a people's love upon him, the bitterness of the past died; the crucifixion of his passions lost its anguish; the serenity of a pardon hard to yield, yet godlike when attained, came to him with the self-conquest he had reached, and the promise of the future rose before him,—

Even as the bow which God hath bent in heaven.

THE END.

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